

Reform by notification

Four labour codes take the reform process forward, but reliance on notifications in a few areas raises questions



RAISINA HILL
A K BHATTACHARYA

India's labour policy has acquired a new look. Four labour codes are now in the public domain and these are the Code on Wages, the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, the Industrial Relations Code and the Code on Social Security.

The Code on Wages was passed by Parliament in early August and the Industrial Relations Code was introduced in the Lok Sabha on November 28. The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code was introduced in the

Lok Sabha in July, but referred to the Standing Committee of Parliament in October. Its report is expected next month. The draft Code on Social Security was approved by the Union Cabinet on December 4 and is expected to be introduced in Parliament soon.

As many as 28 different labour laws have been subsumed in the four codes — 13 in the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, eight in the Code on Social Security, four in the Code on Wages and three laws in the Industrial Relations Code.

It was a long journey, showing once again how slow is the pace of economic reforms in India. The Second National Commission on Labour had submitted its report in June 2002, when Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the prime minister. It had recommended that the existing labour laws should be amalgamated and grouped under five broad heads — (a) industrial relations, (b) wages, (c) social security, (d) safety; and (e) welfare and working conditions.

For well over 17 years, experts and civ-

il servants discussed the implications of these recommendations under three different governments — two led by Manmohan Singh and one by Narendra Modi. The long years of deliberation also reflected the governments' general reluctance to reform laws that might be politically controversial. It was only in the second term of the Narendra Modi government that a decision was taken to merge the various labour laws under four categories — the Commission's recommendation was slightly tweaked by grouping the laws on safety, welfare and working conditions under one code.

What do the four codes of labour policy tell us about the state of reforms in a key segment of the economy? There are four important takeaways from this massive exercise.

One, the Union government has diluted its own role in an important area of labour policy. The Code on Wages restricts the role of the Centre in framing wage-related policies to only railways, mines and oilfields. In all other sectors, the states would be given the freedom to

frame wage policies. This implies that a host of central laws that govern wages for several industries will cease to be effective. Similarly, on minimum wages, the Centre and the states could frame their own wage levels, but these cannot be lower than the floor wages that the new Code would stipulate for different geographies within the country.

Two, the new laws have substantially reduced the powers of the inspectors of the labour department. The Code on Wages, for instance, ensures that the inspector-cum-facilitator shall give an opportunity to the employer before initiation of prosecution proceedings in cases of contravention. The inspector can initiate prosecution proceedings only when there is a repetition of the contravention within a period of five years. In the draft Code on Social Security, the inspectors' power to call for documents on provident fund records has been subjected to a limitation period of five years, beyond which inspectors cannot access such records.

Three, the new labour policy's reliance on notifications has seen an increase that may not make the legislators in Parliament very happy. Of course, the Industrial Relations Code retains the old provisions that required employers of industrial establishments with at least 100 workers to take prior permission of the central or state government before lay-

off, retrenchment or closure. But now it also gives the freedom to the central and state governments to modify the threshold number of workers in establishments by notification. Similarly, the draft Code on Social Security permits the government to change the threshold for coverage of an establishment under the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation or the Employees' State Insurance Corporation by issuing a notification.

Four, the new labour policy has hugely expanded the scope of the coverage of the law to include new categories of employees. The Industrial Relations Code covers the fixed-term employees and ensures that they get all the statutory benefits like social security and wages on a par with the regular employees doing similar work. The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code stipulates that the new law would apply to more sectors of industry including theatre, films, entertainment and media. The draft Code on Social Security ensures that gratuity and insurance benefits are made available to the fixed-term employees and to all those who operate in the app-based sharing economy or the gig economy and work in companies like Uber, Ola or Swiggy.

The Indian economy is bound to be impacted by these major labour policy changes. But how these changes pan out will be known in the next few years.

CHINESE WHISPERS

'Encounter' war



Even as the Telangana police won praise on social media over the alleged encounter of the Hyderabad rape and murder

accused, a war of words has broken out between the Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) on Twitter. After the BSP grabbed the opportunity to hit out at the Adityanath government, suggesting the UP police "learn" from its Hyderabad counterparts, the former retorted with statistics on encounters it has under its belt. Its Twitter post said 103 criminals had been killed by the UP police in 5,178 encounters in the last two years or so, while 17,745 criminals had either surrendered or cancelled their bail to go to jail voluntarily. The tweet saying "Hardly state guests" made an oblique reference to the 1995 state guest house incident, in which BSP supremo Mayawati (pictured) was allegedly attacked by some workers of its on-off ally Samajwadi Party in Lucknow.

Transfer orders



The Andhra Pradesh government has issued an order restricting the tenure of employees, both contractual as well as outsourced,

who work as *peshi* or as the personal staff of ministers and other senior officers, to three years. The move is aimed at curbing corruption and preventing leaks of crucial information. Henceforth, it will be mandatory to transfer the staff after they complete three years in their postings. The tenure was seven years. Will this mitigate instances of wrongdoing? Only time can tell.

Grand celebration

The Congress-led government in MP is set to complete a year. The party and the government are planning to celebrate its "successful one year" on a grand scale. The government, which assumed office on December 17, 2018, will publish a book titled *Logon ki sarkar, Log hi Sarkar* (people's government, people are the government). All ministers have been asked to work on the PR outreach for the book, which is being printed. Sources say the ministers have been specially asked to compare the first year's success with the 15 years of the previous Bharatiya Janata Party government, while promoting the book.

Floccinaucinihilipilification or Panglossian?

The no-rate-cut policy and preference to wait for the Budget and clarity on fiscal front demonstrate Shaktikanta Das is maturing in his new role



BANKER'S TRUST
TAMAL BANDYOPADHYAY

Globally, central banks have stopped surprising the markets. Most prepare the markets for what they do. The latest Reserve Bank of India (RBI) policy is an exception to that trend. Can the non-action be read as status quo or a pause or even postponement of the inevitable? It's a surprise but the shocker is all six members of the monetary policy committee (MPC), including the eternal dove Ravindra Dholakia, endorsing it.

Of course, there is an unambiguous forward guidance: The pause is temporary and there is monetary policy space for future action.

Since the beginning of the rate cutting cycle in February, barring the latest meeting, the MPC has always cut the rate — overall by 135 basis points (bps), from 6.5 per cent to 5.15 per cent. There have been precedents to such cycles. But have we ever seen such a long and deep cycle of cutting GDP growth estimate to accompany it? Since February, each pol-

icy, including the latest one, cut the growth estimate — overall by 240 bps, from 7.4 per cent to 5 per cent. One bps is a hundredth of a percentage point.

The slowdown is a concern but inflation seems to be a bigger worry and the MPC is not willing to take any chances. The retail inflation projection has moved sharply upwards to 5.1-4.7 per cent for the second quarter of 2020. Food, fuel and a hike in telecom tariff are contributing to the rapid rise in inflation. Going by this projection, a rate cut is unlikely in February and even in April. It could be a long pause. The next rate cut could happen in June (if by that time growth does not pick up) after the full-year GDP figure is known and the impact of the Union Budget has sunk in.

Has the MPC taken a wrong call? Or, has it preferred to play safe (because of rising inflation)? I think, it's neither. It's a smart move. Using the rising inflation as an excuse, it has lobbed the ball to the government's court. Central banks globally, including a few emerging markets, have started demonstrating the limitation of the monetary policy. The fiscal policy needs to play its role for lifting growth.

Probably the MPC would not mind the government breaching the 3.3 per cent fiscal deficit target for 2020 but it wants clarity on the extent of fiscal slippage. If the fiscal deficit expands — which it will — and the government borrows more from the market, the RBI will have very little choice but buy bonds. However, that's a different story. After the policy announcement, there was a

mild sell-off and the 10-year bond yield rose around 15 bps. Unless the RBI acts, it will inch towards 7 per cent, negating the benefits of the series of rate cuts.

How has been Das's first year on the Mint Road? It is definitely not a year of "floccinaucinihilipilification" — the 29-letter word used by MPC member Chetan Ghatge that refers to an action or habit of estimating something as worthless. One also cannot say Das maintained a "Panglossian" countenance through the year, smiling away every difficulty.

A bureaucrat who had worked with three finance ministers with elan and had played a key role in planning and executing the demonetisation drive — which many believe is one of the contributing factors to the current slowdown — Das took over as India's chief money man last December after Urjit Patel stepped down, abruptly ending an acrimonious relationship with the finance ministry.

The first thing Das did was reduce the conflict between the government and the RBI which was as intense as the US-China trade war. Behind the conflict were multiple issues — ranging from the government wanting more money from the central bank's reserves to the RBI restricting many unhealthy government-owned banks from giving fresh loans. Das tackled all these with ease and made the long and stormy central bank board meetings into a non-event in no time.

He also opened the gates of communications with all stakeholders — something which was missing in the previous regime. I don't know whether the *glasnost*

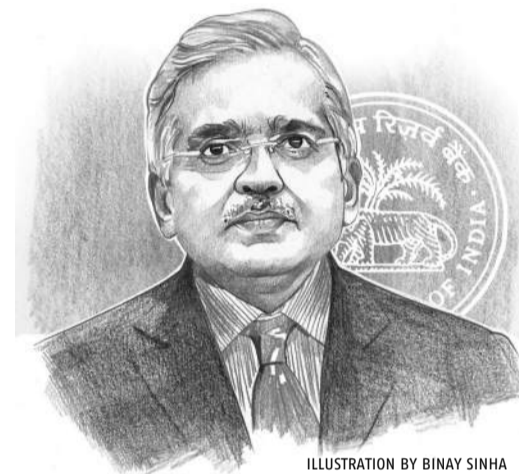


ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA

influences his thinking but by reaching out to the bankers, bond dealers, analysts and economists, he has built in a consultative process which the market is lapping it up. It has its downside too. One offshoot of this consultative process is the time taken to put in place an external benchmark for bank loans which delayed the transmission of rate cuts.

Among other important things, he has stripped the National Housing Bank of its regulatory function following its abject failure in managing the housing finance companies. He has also opened the window to give licence to more small finance banks and the struggling payments banks can convert themselves into small finance banks.

He has been instrumental in diversifying the liquidity management toolkit of the RBI by launching dollar swap auctions — buying dollars from banks and releasing equivalent amount of rupees in the system when liquidity was tight.

Other interesting decisions include allowing non-resident Indian participation in the rupee interest rate derivatives markets and making electronic fund transfer round the clock.

To be fair to him, he saw the economic slowdown coming and started cutting rates just in time. But he did not anticipate the severity of the slowdown. So, he stuck to the baby steps — cutting rates by 25 bps each time even as paring the growth projections by a wider margin. Only once he pushed for an unconventional 35 bps rate cut, saying 50 bps was not required, but followed it up with another 25 bps cut after two months. And, like the economic slowdown, both the RBI and the government underestimated the shadow bank crisis and allowed the problem to fester and spill over to real economy.

One media report says even after a year, Das's heart is still in the finance ministry. His soul is certainly with the central bank. Some of the finance ministry bureaucrats take time to settle down on Mint Road — he is one of them. The December policy could be the tipping point. The no-rate cut policy and preference to wait for the Budget and clarity on the fiscal front demonstrate Das is maturing in his new role.

The writer, a consulting editor with Business Standard, is an author and senior adviser to Jana Small Finance Bank Ltd. Twitter: TamalBandyopadhyay

INSIGHT

Get power tariffs right, please

Offering free electricity is regressive; focus on tariff rationalisation and targeted subsidy



VIVEK SHARMA

The recent tariff subsidy bonanza announced in New Delhi for residential consumers of electricity — of up to 200 units/month — might gratify the public, but goes against economic rationale. Instead, tariff rationalisation and targeted subsidy would go a long way in sustaining the reform momentum started by the Ujwal Discom Assurance Yojana (UDAY). UDAY focused on turnaround of distribution companies (discoms) through cost reduction and improvement in operational efficiency. While it has improved some operational and financial aspects, discoms remain utterly fragile.

The UDAY dashboard shows reduction in aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) loss to about 22 per cent. Cost recovery has improved, too, with the gap between average cost of supply (ACS) and average revenue realised (ARR) narrowing to ₹0.40/unit as on September 2019.

However, going by the scheme's current performance, the Centre is likely to miss the final target of reducing ACS-ARR gap to ₹0/unit, and AT&C losses to 15 per cent by 2020. The gap is significantly high for some states (Rajasthan about ₹1.25/unit, Bihar about ₹0.93/unit, Andhra Pradesh about ₹0.67/unit, Tamil

Nadu about ₹0.78/unit, and Uttar Pradesh about ₹1.1/unit.

Indeed, the overall gap translates to approximately ₹62,482 crore of loss annually. This is over and above "regulatory assets" worth around ₹1.35 trillion created on the balance sheets of discoms because of previous gaps.

As things stand, tariffs do not reflect the cost of supply for some consumers. There is little to no improvement in cross-subsidy levels for industrial and commercial consumers. These tariffs are among the highest in the world, which impacts the cost competitiveness of industries.

As per the Report on "Roadmap for Reduction in Cross-Subsidy" by the Forum of Regulators, cross-subsidy for industrial consumers in Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Punjab, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Uttarakhand, and Madhya Pradesh was higher than the ceiling of 20 per cent set by the National Tariff Policy (NTP). The NTP 2006 and 2016 prescribe criteria for cross-subsidy, envisaging a gradual reduction. In many cases, industrial and commercial tariffs are 50-100 per cent above the 120 per cent ceiling prescribed.

And that's not all. The cost of supply is still way higher for low-tension, or agricultural and domestic consumers, compared with high-tension, or industrial and commercial consumers. This is because the more the money needed for last-mile connectivity, the greater are the losses incurred. Therefore, cross-subsidy levels based on "actual" cost — and not average cost of supply — is very high and unsustainable.

Delhi has one of the highest per capita incomes and highest electricity consumption. It also has perhaps the best quality of electricity supply. Do consumers there even need the subsidy? Delhi also has a cushion of fiscal sur-



plus, which makes such unnecessary doses "affordable" — something states with low per capita, poor quality of supply, and constrained fiscal health can ill-afford. Indeed, as the table (*How they stack up*) shows, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar — with poor capita income and erratic supply — are among the worst off.

The total subsidy and cross-subsidies of discoms at about ₹1.2 trillion in 2018. Such high levels, coupled with ACS-ARR gap and regulatory assets, would render the power sector powerless, impacting fresh investments in generation and transmission, as well.

Not all is lost, though. Three proactive measures can address the situation:

- Calibrated tariff hikes: Just like diesel prices were deregulated with a monthly increase of ₹0.50/litre, electricity tariffs could also be tweaked up monthly/quarterly for at least three years, based on predetermined percent that may include some realistic efficiency inbuilt. Some may argue that this amounts to passing on potential inefficiencies of the distribution entity to the consumer. But the fact is, there is a large ACS-ARR gap, accumulated losses, and piled up regu-

HOW THEY STACK UP

	Monthly per capita income (at current prices)*	Per capita residential electricity consumption* (kwh)
AP	13,669	185 units
Delhi	30,461	1,000 units
Bihar	5,113	30 units
UP	3,652	42 units

*Per capita income is the estimate from respective state economic handbooks, published by state planning departments. *Per capita electricity consumption is (energy generated + net imports)/total population Source: Economic Survey of Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh (2018-19), Central Electricity Authority and Ministry of Power

latory assets that need to be cleared. This would be subject to regulatory scrutiny at the end of the three-year period.

- Guidelines for cross-subsidy reduction: To reduce the cross-subsidy on industrial and commercial customers going forward, state regulators need to implement reduction in cross-subsidies and removal of political inertia in increasing domestic and agricultural tariffs gradually. Ultimately, subsidy (if required), directly must go only to deserving consumers, with low per capita income or below poverty line.
- Direct benefit transfer (DBT): To plug leakage and ensure targeted subsidy, DBT could be implemented. States may replicate in the power sector what the Centre successfully did with liquefied petroleum gas subsidies.

Sans tariff rationalisation and targeted subsidy, all other reforms efforts — including open access, retail-supply separation, and even public-private partnership/privatisation — will not yield the desired results.

The author is senior director, CRISIL Infrastructure Advisory

LETTERS

Tighten the noose

This refers to the editorial "Protect ordinary investors" (December 5). Notwithstanding the rise in loan-related frauds, many lenders are in the habit of disregarding the guidelines of the RBI, thus benefiting the unruly borrowers causing losses to the banks and eventually, adversely affecting the financial system. It is imperative to conduct a thorough probe into the granting of loan against third party shares belonging to the retail investors. In this case, the brokers pledging the shares must have an irrevocable authority to pledge the shares. If it is in the negative, it denotes that the broker firm that created the pledge has transferred a defective title to the lender and hence, the lender must recall the credit facility.

The market regulator must bolster its oversight on the activities of the share brokers to ensure that the retail investors' interest is protected; else they too will flee from the market thereby negatively impacting market stability. Loans against shares are riskier vis-a-vis other types of loans. Though the RBI has stipulated tight norms for lending against shares, the lending in this category is not fair, and therefore it must tighten its oversight to secure the loans and advances against shares.

VSK Pillai Kottayam

Logical stand

This refers to the editorial "Inflation warrior" (December 6). You have rightly appreciated the action of the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) monetary policy committee (MPC). The apex bank, often the target of criticism for kowtowing to the wishes of the government, has done the right thing by not reducing the policy repo rate. The decision shows maturity of thinking, detailed study and logical interpretation of the ground realities and application of mind for arriving at a unanimous decision.

The markets were indeed surprised

because everyone was hoping that rate cuts will continue and the cumulative 135 basis points since February will become 160 or more. But the central bank's role is not only to keep the markets happy. It has a much bigger, overarching role to keep a sharp eye not only on inflation but also on the economic growth in a holistic manner. One must applaud its stand.

Let it continue with the declared stand and also work towards "an appropriate balance between the fiscal and monetary policies". It is prudent on its part to wait for the Union Budget, give more time to banks to reflect on the effect of earlier cuts in lending rates and perhaps also get a better idea about food inflation.

Krishan Kalra Gurugram

Being cautious

This refers to the editorial "Inflation warrior" (December 6). Controlling inflation has always been the main concern of the RBI. On many occasions, the RBI did not cut repo rate much to the disappointment of the government that wanted the cut to spur growth. This is precisely because the RBI gave preference to inflation control over growth push. However, in the last few occasions, RBI went for a repo rate cut to address growth concerns.

This time around, with its decision, the RBI wants to assess the impact of stimulus measures announced by the government to revive growth and decide accordingly once the picture is clearer. The editorial rightly sums up that the current pause shows that the MPC will use the available policy space more judiciously. Clearly, the RBI does not want to commit anything as yet.

Sanjeev Kumar Singh Jabalpur

Letters can be mailed, faxed or e-mailed to: The Editor, Business Standard Nehru House, 4 Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg New Delhi 110 002 Fax: (011) 23720201 E-mail: letters@bsmail.in All letters must have a postal address and telephone number

Fixing the GST

Fundamental improvements to the flawed structure needed

It has been reported that the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council, the body comprising the Union finance minister and those of the states, is considering a revision in the indirect tax's rate structure. In particular, as reported by this newspaper, it is possible that the 5 per cent rate will be raised to 6 per cent. The government hopes that this will increase the effectiveness of the tax, which has been severely underperforming against the target of around ₹1.2 trillion a month. But this deficit will not be fully bridged by a marginal increase in the lower rate — after all, the 5 per cent rate brings in only 5 per cent of GST collection. While the council's intention is understandable, it is clear that this will only amount to tinkering around the margins.

GST, together with the broader slowdown, has provoked a fiscal crisis that will require careful management. Although revenue is likely to fall short by a significant margin, raising indirect tax at the moment could further dampen sentiment in the economy. The Union finance minister has assured states that GST compensation will continue to be handed out. The Union government is legally mandated to compensate states if their GST revenue does not grow by an annual rate of 14 per cent. Since this is not happening at the moment — the Union is not making payments, either — compensation arrears are building up. Without the release of the tens of thousands of crores that they are owed, states will be forced to borrow, further driving up the general government deficit and reducing the funds available to the private sector for growth and investment. On top of GST, the government imposes a compensation cess, which is meant to provide for payments to state governments, but even this has been bringing in less than what is required. As has been reported, an increase in the compensation cess is also being contemplated.

While many welcomed the flawed GST when it was introduced, that approval was conditional on the structure being improved as time went by in order to bring it closer to the ideal, efficient version. This work of rationalisation and simplification cannot be put off any longer.

Thus, what is necessary instead of further tinkering is a deeper and harder look at how to fix GST and at the government's fiscal situation overall. More fundamental problems will have to be addressed. It may be the case that, in the absence of a proper invoice matching mechanism that was planned, evasion is growing. If so, however, blindly implementing invoice matching during a slowdown may also be dangerous, given that it might significantly increase transaction costs. The GST Council must go back to the basics and recognise that the economic logic behind GST is that it would make paying taxes so easy that evasion became less widespread. This would require a simple, clear, and transparent tax system, ideally with a single rate. At the very least, rationalising all tax slabs must now be on the agenda, alongside a proper study of what a revenue-neutral, single rate would be, now that there is sufficient data from GST collection.

Pricing power

Telcos should not give up freedom to set tariffs

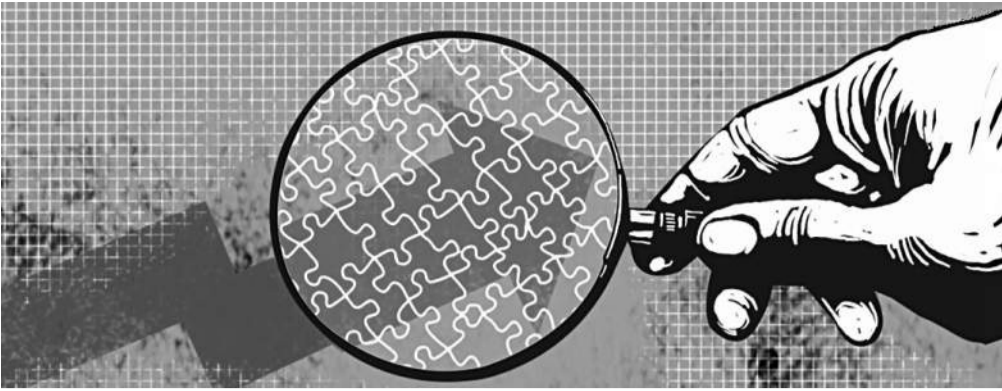
All three private telecom operators, who are rarely on the same page on any issue, have together asked the sector regulator, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai), to set floor prices for mobile data services, while retaining voice calls under the ongoing forbearance regime. In practice since 2003, forbearance implies that telcos are free to fix all tariffs other than for national roaming and fixed rural telephony. Shifting to a floor price regime would mean no company will be allowed to offer tariffs below the mark set by the regulator. In a letter to Trai, telcos said tariff correction in the current level of fierce competition was not possible by any service provider voluntarily and, therefore, the only option available was prescribing a minimum tariff for mobile data service by the regulator.

By asking Trai to intervene, the industry is giving up its power to set tariffs for a service that is already a driving force in many ways, and will only grow in significance. That's a wrong call when tariffs are controlled by market forces across most sectors in mature economies. Any shift will be anti-consumer and against the principle of the free market. Also, the telcos' decision to seek two sets of norms — for voice and data — is flawed. In their submission, the operators have argued that unlike in the case of mobile data, voice is considered an essential service for subscribers, mainly at the bottom rung. That, according to the industry players, explains the need for voice to remain in the present forbearance regime. However, the truth is that mobile data, which enables free messaging on apps like WhatsApp, is as much an essential service as voice not just in urban areas but in rural India as well. Not only that, telcos often sell voice and mobile data packages together, and any data floor price will come with the risk of distorting the free market principle.

At a time when the industry is on a weak wicket due to the financial stress, made worse by the recent Supreme Court verdict on adjusted gross revenue (AGR) with an estimated ₹1.4 trillion demand in past dues on telcos, they must refrain from surrendering their tariff-setting power. Indeed, the duress in the telecom industry was captured in industrialist Kumar Mangalam Birla's statement last week when he said Vodafone Idea would have to shut shop in the absence of government support. While the government can step in by allowing staggered payment of the AGR dues and waiving some penalties, so that the telecom industry does not become a duopoly if not a monopoly, the regime of forbearance for tariff, both for voice and mobile data, should not be changed. There's no reason why the industry players themselves cannot be more responsible in setting tariffs. Recently, all three players raised tariffs after several years. Therefore, asking Trai to set a floor price for data seems to be an irrelevant demand.

However, this is not the first time that the industry is looking for a regulatory intervention in setting a floor price. In 2017, after Reliance Jio disrupted the market through freebies, some incumbents had sought floor prices for both voice and mobile data services. At that point, Trai rejected the proposal, saying floor price wasn't a workable idea and that prices under forbearance should continue. Trai should take a similar stand now.

ILLUSTRATION: AJAY MOHANTY



Three dangerous myths

The errors and misapprehensions that led to constant optimism about Indian growth

The kindest interpretation of the current government's actions in the years leading up to this slowdown is that it genuinely believed its own propaganda. Some have feared that its habit of concealing and denying inconvenient data while pushing forward a rosy narrative for investors and voters suggests a cynical disconnect between its analysis in private and public. But this may be untrue. What if the government genuinely believed that, all this time, the economy was a few quarters away from sustained high growth? This might raise one or two questions about their judgement and the government's in-house analytical capabilities, but it would at least clear them of the charge of duplicity.

Certainly, since 2014, there has been no dearth of optimistic voices demanding that there should be less "negativity" about the economy. Now that most such voices have been silenced, at least for now, it is worth giving them the benefit of the doubt and asking why and how one could have been misled.

Essentially, there were three big myths that many people bought into, and which helped lead us to this situation.

The first myth: The notion that the crisis of 2012-13 was over. Recall those days of "policy paralysis"? The majority diagnosis then was that the UPA government was paralysed, and its lack of policy making strength and political capital had led to a frozen economy, slowing investment, and thus collapsing growth. Thus, when a government with a parliamentary majority and enormous political capital was sworn in in 2014, a recovery from the crisis seemed assured. But that was based on a misapprehension.



POLICY RULES

MIHIR S SHARMA

The problem in 2012-13 was not, in fact, policy paralysis linked to a particular administration, but a crisis of the Indian state machinery that spilled over into the private sector. Regulation was not strong enough to create both growth and transparency; poor dispute settlement mechanisms meant that capital was too gravely at risk; and suspicion about even mundane administrative actions that affected private sector returns meant that excessive caution had crept in. These problems required structural administrative reform. Some such changes have indeed been made — the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code was among them. But, overall, the basic building blocks of the crisis were not addressed. What we are in now is not a product of that past crisis — it is the very same crisis. It was just put on the back burner, thanks to a sharp turn in the commodity price cycle, which provided a positive shock to the supply side and to government prices, between 2014 and 2016, and subsequently a recovery from an additional crisis forced on the economy by demonetisation and the botched goods and services tax (GST) implementation in 2016-17. Now that these latter two impulses have run their course, we are back in 2013.

The second myth: The notion that big-ticket public investment is sufficient for growth. This arises from several misapprehensions, including a misreading of the China model. The fact is that better infrastructure matters only if the private sector finds it profitable to use it. Thus public funding of such infrastructure only pays off if the private sector also finds itself willing and able to co-invest in the new projects that will feed off the additional infrastructure. In China, which is a

Economy: This is as good as it gets

The growth of India's gross domestic product (GDP) dropped to just 4.5 per cent in the second quarter of this fiscal year. For the entire year, growth will, at best, be 5 per cent. The common man is no wiser as to how, despite being ruled by a *Vikas Purush* for more than five years, growth has crashed from 7.5 per cent to 4.5 per cent. Despondency is all around, but there were hardly any cogent, official, economic arguments (other than silly sound bites from party lackeys) explaining this unexpected phenomenon. Well, official economic arguments are now available. Bibek Debroy, chairman of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council (PMEAC), has written a piece in *Open* magazine, explaining what to make of the slowdown. Here are his main arguments.

1. Hey, we are still growing; be happy: India remains among the fastest-growing countries in the world. Economic illiterates (my expression, not his) talk of a recession without realising that recession, among the few things, is precisely defined in economics as: GDP shrinkage over two successive quarters. This is true, but Mr Debroy misses the point of expectations vs. reality. Did people vote for a better or a worse outcome? In 2014, did he honestly expect 5 per cent GDP growth after five years of the Modi raj? Or was it the opposite?

2. Inflation is low; be happy: Since GDP figures are adjusted for inflation, with inflation around 3 per cent, nominal growth will be 8 per cent for the year. One of the major successes of the government since 2014 has been lower inflation, which we don't seem to appreciate enough. Inflation hurts the poor more, he argues. We would have been far worse with 5 per cent real growth, 10 per cent inflation, and nominal growth of 15 per cent, he reminds us.

There are several issues here. Low inflation is an



IRRATIONAL CHOICE

DEBASHIS BASU

outcome of low aggregate demand. It is not an entirely independent variable. Because of various actions and inactions of the Modi government, growth — and, therefore, inflation — is down. It was an unintended consequence, which is now being touted as an achievement. There is no evidence that bringing down inflation to give relief to the poor was a policy objective. In fact, one of the often-repeated grand promises of the Modi raj was to double the farmers' income. This would have meant massive food inflation, given that India is not a significant agricultural exporter.

3. Blame weak global trade, not the government: At least 3 percentage points of GDP growth comes from exports, argues Mr Debroy. If export growth peters out, we go down to 6 per cent GDP growth. Three factors influence exports, according to him: Global demand, global supply, and the exchange rate. The government cannot do anything about the first and very little about the third. As for supply, "the Government has introduced measures to improve logistics". That's it, and so "net exports will continue to be a constraint".

If all this sounds too pat, academic, and unconnected to what is happening on the ground, it indeed is. In 2010, China's share of worldwide export of textiles was 36.6 per cent, which went down to 31.3 per cent in 2018 due to higher labour cost and other structural changes. Which countries benefited? Vietnam's share shot up from 2.9 per cent to 6.2 per cent and Bangladesh's share went up from 4.2 per cent to 6.4 per cent. India's share went down from 3.3 per cent to 3.2 per cent. Why so? Because of enormous frictional costs of doing business in India, imposed by the central and state governments. This needs to be fixed through structural reforms but that is a pointless argument, according to Mr Debroy. Please see the next point.

state-directed economy, the private sector could easily be pushed into doing so. In India, this is less possible — and doubly so when the private sector finds itself short of funds anyway. Thus, while one might welcome the partial use of the commodity price bonanza on an infrastructure build-out from the state, the fact remains that without addressing constraints on the private sector — overcapacity, a debt overhang, tax terrorism, and stifling regulation — such infra spending would not have a "crowding in" effect. Thus the marginal product of this investment capital from the state was probably extremely low. There's no point building highways if nobody wants to buy trucks to run on them, or if there isn't enough growth in the amount of goods being transported.

The third myth: The idea of unquenchable Indian domestic demand. We had several years in which demand appeared to be solidly supporting growth. But this was a product of populist policy that (temporarily) supported income growth, household credit expansion, and positive supply side shocks thanks to a structural reduction in food and fuel inflation. None of these three factors are sustainable. Sustainable demand growth without an increase in either overall productivity or factor utilisation is difficult to envisage. The unspoken hope was that demand would keep climbing till capacity utilisation in the private sector passed some (unknown) threshold, at which the investment engine was to start up again. But it seems even if that was possible, the demand push has broken down short of such a point. The private sector is certainly credit-constrained, but nor is it feeling the need to borrow in order to finance investment projects that have suddenly become attractive. The problem here is that there has been far too much overconfidence about the size and composition of the Indian consumer economy. An economy at our level of development cannot depend merely on domestic demand to pull investment and growth up. The only true interpretation of China's growth miracle — and that of the rest of East Asia before it — is that it emerged from coupling domestic supply responses to global, instead of domestic, demand. In other words, India has to be a trading nation. Perhaps the government is right to want to protect aspects of domestic industry from the effects of trade. But, if so, its project from day one should have been to make the case that Indian development requires access to world markets alongside some reasonable and temporary protections for its infant industries. Unfortunately, it instead has fallen in love with the notion of Indian industry servicing domestic demand, and the rest of the world be damned. Naturally, this means that overcapacity will continue to plague the Indian private sector, given the impossibility of isolated and sustained demand growth.

Thus, if one is to have an optimistic view of the medium term, it will depend on whether these essential sources of negativity are removed. Structural reform of administration and factor markets is necessary in order to move on from the crisis that began in 2012-13; the quality of government spending must increase, alongside co-operation with the private sector, in order to ensure that government capital spending raises productivity and growth; and chronic overcapacity and a shortage of remunerative investment project must be alleviated by a 180-degree shift in our trade policy. If not, it is clear there is ample reason to continue to be negative.

4. Structural vs. cyclical? It's pointless: "There is a slightly sterile debate that goes on about a structural versus cyclical diagnosis," writes Mr Debroy. Why is it sterile? Because, here again, the government is helpless, he suggests. He assumes that structural changes only mean privatisation and changes in labour and land laws. "Privatisation is a process and cannot be rushed through. Legislative changes may be necessary and one may have to go back to Parliament," while land, the most valuable asset, is typically owned by state governments; it cannot be sold by the Union government.

Land and labour are partly state subjects and the Land Acquisition Act of 2013 has raised land costs and made infrastructure projects difficult, points out Mr Debroy. The all-India growth rate is a function of what happens in state governments, according to him. The Union government cannot do much. These are straw-man arguments. Structural reforms are much less about privatisation, land, and labour, and more about expanding the scope of private enterprises and allowing them to be more competitive and productive. This should start with removing the enormous frictional cost of doing business and reducing corruption in the states. In a piece in 2015, I asked why the prime minister, who is the BJP's only vote-getter even in state elections, could not work with BJP-controlled states and show us what reforms could be achieved at the state level.

So, net-net, according to Mr Debroy, there is no gloom and doom in a 5 per cent growth rate; it will pick up to 6 per cent, but not much more and the ongoing "clean-up" will lead to a "more efficient and more formal economy", but not overnight. Mr Debroy's arguments throw very useful light on what you can expect this government to do about the slowdown — something we all are clamouring to know. The answer to that is, underwhelming: Not much.

The writer is the editor of www.moneylife.in
Twitter: @Moneylifers

Supreme partisanship



BOOK REVIEW

ADAM COHEN

Brett Kavanaugh had a confirmation hearing like none other, because of the extraordinary testimony of one woman. Christine Blasey Ford, a psychology professor, told the Senate Judiciary Committee that Kavanaugh had sexually assaulted her at a high school party decades earlier. "Brett got on top of me," she said, and "began running his hands over my body and grinding his hips into me." He groped her, she said, and tried to take her clothes off. When she yelled, she said, he put his hand over her mouth. "It was hard for me to

breathe," she said, "and I thought that Brett was accidentally going to kill me."

Ms Blasey Ford's testimony was precise, measured and credible. Even many of Kavanaugh's supporters thought it sounded the death knell for his nomination. "Almost all of us were saying, 'It's over,'" recalled Jeff Flake, then a senator from Arizona.

It was not over, of course, and today Mr Kavanaugh sits on the highest court in the land. How he overcame Blasey Ford's testimony — and allegations of sexual misconduct from other witnesses — is the subject of *Supreme Ambition*, by Ruth Marcus, a deputy editor of *The Washington Post's* editorial page. Ms Marcus's book is impressively reported, highly insightful and a rollicking good read. It also adds another dispiriting data point that the American Republic is seriously ailing.

Mr Kavanaugh was in many ways a perfect Republican nominee for the court.

An only child from a Catholic family in suburban Maryland, he was the son of a lobbyist father and a prosecutor mother. He attended Yale College and Law School, and clerked for two Republican appeals court judges and then for Justice Anthony Kennedy. He worked for Kenneth Starr's investigation of Bill Clinton; helped in the Florida recount that brought George W. Bush to power in 2000; served in the Bush White House; and finally became a judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit. Along the way, Mr Kavanaugh married Ashley Estes, a young Texan who was President Bush's personal secretary — which helped place him in the Bush inner circle.

There was, however, a dark strand running through Mr Kavanaugh's life of calculated achievement: heavy drinking. In his high school yearbook, he made a reference to "100 Kegs or Bust," and in college, his interests included the annual Tang competition, an elaborate intramural beer-drinking relay race. Law school classmates have said little about his intellectual pursuits, but one recalled, "If you had asked me who was the biggest drinker

in our class I would have said Brett."

As a judge on the D.C. Circuit, a traditional farm team for Supreme Court justices, Mr Kavanaugh became a leading candidate for the court — and he pursued the prize aggressively. There was one advocate whose opinion counted most of all — Justice Kennedy, whose seat Mr Kavanaugh ended up filling. *Supreme Ambition* has made news with its report that, when he presided over Justice Neil Gorsuch's swearing in at the White House in 2017, Justice Kennedy requested a private meeting with President Trump to promote Kavanaugh for the court. If Justice Kennedy did argue for his former law clerk, it was a disturbing intervention across the lines separating the judicial and executive branches — but also a successful one.

After Ms Blasey Ford, other witnesses emerged. Deborah Ramirez, a college classmate, told reporters that Mr Kavanaugh thrust his penis in her face at a party, although she had significant memory lapses. Another late-arriving witness, the Washington lawyer Max Stier, remembered seeing Mr Kavanaugh in col-

lege exposing himself to a different woman, lending possible further credence to Ms Ramirez's account.

The most interesting part of Ms Marcus's narrative is her discussion of why, in the end, the evidence mattered so little. Much of the credit goes to Mr Kavanaugh, whose own Senate testimony was as effective, in its way, as Ms Blasey Ford's was. Kavanaugh's proclamations about liking beer were widely. But his angry insistence that he was the true victim — which took a page from Clarence Thomas's response to Anita Hill's sexual harassment charges decades earlier — shifted the momentum in his direction.

Mr Kavanaugh also had strong allies in his corner. The White House counsel Don McGahn kept the FBI on a short leash, and its decision not to interview Mr Stier — an "inexcusable lapse," as Ms Marcus notes — helped prevent a stronger case from being built against Mr Kavanaugh.

His confirmation has profound implications for the court. If he turns out to be significantly more conservative than Justice Kennedy, he could provide the fifth vote to end abortion rights or affirmative

action. His arrival also means that two of the nine justices joined the court despite credible charges of serious misconduct toward women — which has done incalculable damage to the court's reputation.

There was something even more profound at stake: whether, on the most important questions, our nation is capable of putting the public interest ahead of partisanship, and whether the truth matters. The week before this book's publication date, President Trump told his 67 million Twitter followers that "the Ruth Marcus book is a badly written & researched disaster. So many incorrect facts. Fake News, just like the @washington post!" It would be hard to imagine a more persuasive endorsement.

©2019 The New York Times News Service

SUPREME AMBITION
Brett Kavanaugh and the Conservative Takeover
Ruth Marcus
Simon & Schuster; \$28; 482 pages

Opinion

MONDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2019

Rational Expectations

SUNIL JAIN

sunil.jain@expressindia.com
@thesuniljain



The multi-layered arbitration mess

SC did well to invalidate Section 87 of the Act, but whether govt will pay dues or respect Arbitration Act remains to be seen

ONE OF THE manifestly unfair aspects of the insolvency resolution process—this is not, though, the fault of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)—has always been the fact that, while various arms of the government don't pay their dues to private firms for a long time, government-owned banks are free to take these same companies to the insolvency courts when they don't get paid; a good example of this is Ajit Gulabchand, whose Lavasa city project was taken by the banks to IBC for non-payment of dues while his Hindustan Construction Company (HCC) is owed over ₹6,000 crore by the government's National Highways Authority of India (NHAI). While the Supreme Court (SC) has just ruled in favour of HCC in a case that will have a bearing on the entire infrastructure sector, it is not clear how soon HCC will get the funds, or whether the government has learned any lessons from this.

Though the government is keen to promote India as a global arbitration hub, and also to use arbitration to clear a large part of the 3-crore-plus cases in various courts (or at least the ones relating to commercial contracts), its own conduct is less than exemplary, and that is what the HCC case was all about.

While the spirit of arbitration, globally, has been that arbitration awards are binding on both parties—unless there has been some fraud in the awards process—the government has violated this principle on most occasions. In the case of firms like Vodafone and Cairn Energy (on the foreign side) and Reliance Industries (on the Indian side) who invoked international arbitration when their dispute with the government could not be resolved amicably, the government used every trick in the book to delay this. This ranged from arguing, in the case of Vodafone and Cairn, that a tax dispute could not be arbitrated to delaying, in the case of Reliance, the appointment of arbitrators.

In other cases, such as the Antrix-Devas one (Antrix is the commercial arm of ISRO), where a global arbitration went against the government, the award was challenged in a local court, and that is where matters stand. While the government wanting to delay an award where it had to shell out money is still understandable, it tried to thwart an award in the Tata-Docomo case, where it had no financial stake; in this case, when the award went against the Tatas, the government argued that the Tata-Docomo contract was itself illegal, so the award was incorrect. Fortunately for the Tatas (who wanted to pay the damages!) and Docomo, the judge said that the award would be upheld, and if the Tatas paying Docomo meant the group was in violation of Fema, it could pay the penalty for that as well.

To return to the HCC story, the petition was about Section 87 that was inserted into the arbitration law a few months ago, and allowed an automatic stay on all arbitral awards handed out in proceedings that commenced before October 2015; all that it needed was for someone, like NHAI after it had lost the arbitration, to challenge it in court. HCC's lawyers, not surprisingly, argued that the section violated the Constitution, and even the principle of the arbitration law, since the award is no longer binding. For arbitration proceedings that started after October 2015, there was no confusion since the 2015 amendment in the law said that companies—or say an NHAI—had to argue in court to get a stay; it was no longer automatic, as was the case prior to October 2015.

What is amazing, as the SC ruled last week, is that the government brought in Section 87 despite the fact that there was an SC ruling—*BCCI vs Kochi Cricket*, 2018—which clarified that “the introduction of Section 87 would result in a delay of disposal of arbitration proceedings, and an increase in the interference of courts in arbitration matters, which defeats the very object of the Arbitration Act, 1996, which was strengthened by the 2015 Amendment Act”. Indeed, while the government brought in Section 87 citing the Justice Srikrishna panel recommendation, the SC said this was made in July 2017 whereas the BCCI case ruling was later; the government, then, had to go by what the court said.

What is unfortunate, however, is that while the SC removed a big obstacle for firms like HCC that are trying to get back their dues via arbitration courts, the court seems to have agreed with the Solicitor General in that a writ petition filed under Article 32 of the Constitution cannot be converted into a recovery proceeding; in other words, HCC will have to go back to each high court where NHAI got a stay, and get it to enforce each individual arbitration award.

While there is a 2016 NITI Aayog circular that says 75% of the award must be paid immediately even in the case of a stay order, there is a catch. Since the 75% has to be deposited with the court, the company that won the arbitration award gets no relief. While challenging the HCC figures on how much was due to it, the government affidavit itself said the “PSUs had already paid/deposited a substantial amount (approximately 83.30%) payable by them under the arbitral awards”; deposited is the operative term here. If the money has to be got by the company, it needs to give a bank guarantee for the amount, and an additional amount of 10% also needs to be given; but, many of the companies are too financially stressed to be able to get a bank guarantee.

So, if this SC ban on the automatic stay is really to help, not only will courts have to be strict about granting stays on arbitration awards—only if there is *prima facie* evidence of fraud in the award should this be given—the government will have to ensure that banks are even willing to provide guarantees in such cases; it is not clear how firms who can't afford the bank guarantees are to be helped. Also, if PSUs or government bodies/departments are to keep challenging arbitration awards as a matter of course, as they do now, it defeats the purpose; that will require a near-complete change in mindset on the part of the government.

Bad MEDICINE

A blanket ban on e-pharmacies is unjust when its the government that needs to finalise rules

IN SEPTEMBER 2018, the Centre published a set of draft rules for regulating e-pharmacies, inviting feedback from the public. At the time, many hailed it as a progressive move since the players in the space could now move forward on compliance and certainty. But, more than a year later, the future of e-pharmacies is under the shadow of uncertainty. First, the Delhi and Madras High Courts had banned online sale of medicines—the Madras HC later vacated its order. Now, the Drug Controller General of India, a department of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO), has asked all states and union territories to prohibit the sale of drugs through unlicensed online platforms. Most e-pharmacies operate through licenced offline pharmacies to execute orders, and given there are no explicit rules about e-pharma licensing yet, it isn't clear if the current rules impact these or not. More important, in the absence of government clarification, everything is left to the interpretation of CDSCO. If the CDSCO is to consider the current model legitimate, the likes of Netmed and 1mg shall continue to operate, but if it considers licensing for these companies as necessary, then most online sales will be banned till the government comes out with rules for the segment.

While the Delhi High Court recently ordered the Delhi government and the Centre to stop the sale of scheduled drugs without prescription, the government seems to lack the tools to address this. Though the government has norms against sales of scheduled drugs, and online players do require uploading of prescription, local pharma stores often don't adhere to the rules. By mandating the same set of rules for e-pharmacies and offline ones, but implementing it mostly for the former, the government could be queering the playing field.

IF THE TUMULTUOUS developments that took place in Maharashtra's politics over the last three weeks make anything clear, it is that everyone swears to help peasants first. Devendra Fadnavis's 80-hour government sanctioned ₹5,830 crore from the Maharashtra Contingency Fund to give relief to farmers affected by unseasonal rains. One wonders what happened to crop insurance, if the money had to finally come from the state exchequer. The Shiv Sena-NCP-Congress coalition declared that it would announce something bigger for farmers very soon. But, before doing that, it wants to first map and assess various schemes linked to farmers. That is a wise decision. And, given that Sharad Pawar is at the helm of affairs, it is a golden chance for Maharashtra to frame an agricultural policy that can be a lighthouse for many other states of India.

Maharashtra's farmers have been in the news quite often, and for the wrong reason: high incidence of farmers' suicides. While a little less than 10% of India's population resides in Maharashtra, it accounted for 41% of farmers' suicides in the country, as per the latest data. Although suicides are a very complex sociological phenomenon, it perhaps reflects the high levels of stress in Maharashtra's agriculture. Early action is needed basically on two fronts: (1) issues of irrigation and water use management; and (2) building globally competitive value chains for major agri-commodities of the state, from farm to fork.

One of the key problems in Maharashtra's agriculture is the low irrigation

FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH

WITH SHARAD PAWAR AT THE HELM OF THE RULING COALITION, THE STATE MUST FOCUS ON WATER-USE EFFICIENCY AND LEGALISE GM CROPS BEING CULTIVATED WITHOUT APPROVAL

Pawar-ing up Maharashtra's agri policy

ASHOK GULATI & SHYMA JOSE

Gulati is Infosys chair professor of Economics, & Jose is Research associate, ICRIER. Views are personal

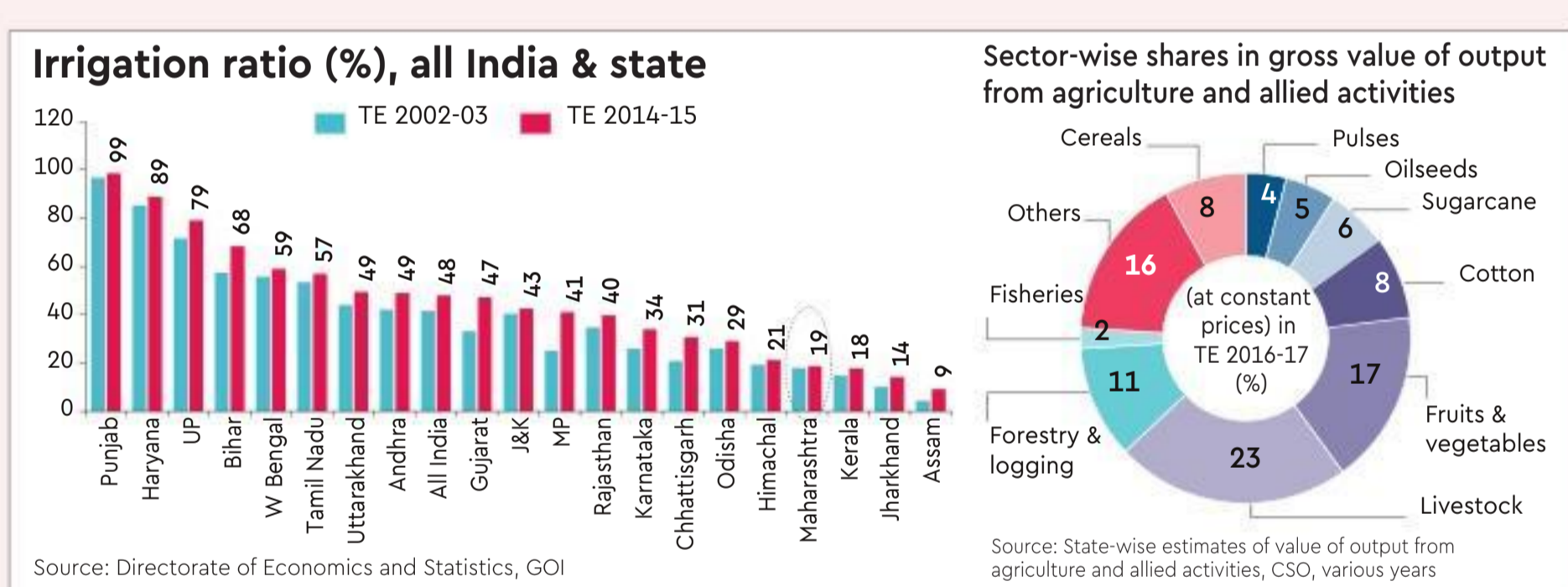


ratio, which stood at just 19% for triennium average ending (TE) 2014-15, compared to 48% at the all-India level (see graphic). Ironically, during TE 2002-03 to TE 2014-15, irrigation ratio increased only by one percentage point.

As of June 2017, the irrigation potential created (IPC) by Maharashtra's water resource department (WRD) stood at 50.4 lakh hectares, while the irrigation potential utilised (IPU) was only 39.5 lakh hectares, or 78.4% (Economic Survey of Maharashtra, 2018-19). Massive public investments are needed to decrease the IPC-IPU gap, but that seems like a distant goal given the high leakages in the irrigation projects. The NABARD-Icrier study on 'Getting More from Less', by Gulati *et al* (2019), has estimated that the capital cost of major and medium irrigation (MMI) schemes in Maharashtra was the highest in the country, at ₹13.5 lakh/hectare of IPC; the all-India average cost was ₹4.5 lakh/hectare of IPC. The cost per hectare of IPU is even higher, at ₹20.4 lakh/hectare. Given the alarmingly high capital cost in public irrigation, it is important to ensure transparency and accountability before any more money is put into it. Else, that money will also disappear as water dis-

appears in sand.

But, ensuring better use of irrigation water is perhaps even more important than investing more in MMI schemes. A water-guzzling crop like sugarcane (remember, one kilogram of sugar needs 2,300 litres of water) occupies less than 4% of the cropped area, is entirely irrigated, and takes away 65% of the state's irrigation water. On the other hand, cotton, which occupies roughly 18% of the cropped area, is just 2.7% irrigated. No wonder, most of farmers' suicides take place in the cotton belt. The policy direction is quite clear: Contain area under sugarcane and bring it under drip irrigation, saving almost 50% of irrigation water, and channel that to other crops, especially cotton, and fruits and vegetables, where value generation per drop of water can be very high. Maharashtra's cotton yield stood at 339 kg/hectare, much lower than the all-India average (457 kg/hectare) in TE 2017-18. Gujarat's cotton area is about 60% irrigated, compared to less than 3% in Maharashtra, and that makes a Gujarati cotton farmer much more globally competitive than a Maharashtra farmer. Also, HT-Bt cotton, which is already being grown on 15-20% of Maharashtra's cot-



Religion and economic growth

If a country records slow or retarding growth, it has only immediate policy failures to blame, not the deep unchangeable past or religion/culture

MEGHNAD DESAI

Prominent economist & Labour peer. Views are personal



THE EXPRESSION 'THE Hindu rate of growth' has often incited anger from Hindu nationalists, who think it an insult to the Hindus. It was meant as a pun on the word secular, which, in economics, stands for long run, e.g., the secular rate of growth. Professor Raj Krishna, who was a rare example of a witty economist, made the pun when discussing the then low secular rate of the Indian economy, about 3.5%.

Recently, someone challenged my claim that it was meant as a pun. He believed there was a serious intention of saying that there was something in the Hindu religion that led to low growth. If that were so, the much higher growth rate in the twenty-odd years since 1998 has disproved that proposition. If anything, the Hindu religion has had greater prominence in Indian politics since 1998 than in the previous fifty years.

However, now that the growth rate is on the downward path, arguments are being heard from BJP MPs that the GDP is irrelevant. Immediately after the victory in May, we heard that it was politics, i.e., Balakot, which won the day, not growth rate or unemployment. So, we can get back to the question. Is the expression 'Hindu rate of growth' just an economist's joke, or is it for real? Is Hinduism bad for economic growth?

As an economist, I find the economic explanation sufficient to explain why economies grow faster rather than slower. It is not that culture and religion do not matter—they define a people. But, they are higher order, i.e., less important, explanatory variables for economic growth differences between countries.

But, the origin of this question about the effect of religion/culture on eco-

nomic outcomes began not in explaining underdevelopment, but the contrast between North-Central Europe and Southern Europe, or what was, in essence, the Protestant as against the Catholic culture in Europe.

Max Weber, the great German sociologist, posed a question, back in the last century, that reverberates today. It is about the intimate connection between religion and economics. Weber asked why capitalism emerged first in the Protestant countries of North-Central Europe rather than the Catholic countries of South Europe. Capitalism was synonymous with rational calculation, rather than trusting higher powers of God and fate.

Rumy Hasan's recent book *Religion and Development in the Global South* has adapted the Weber question not to ask why capitalism, in whatever form, did or did not emerge in some region or other; he is, instead, asking a question that is relevant to mine: The expression 'Global South' in his title immediately tells you that he is speaking of underdevelopment in a global context. South stands for poverty, underdevelopment, and repeated failure to escape the low-income-level trap.

So, is religion a cause of persistent underdevelopment in the South? He considers Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, and Confucianism, using the available data on Human Development Index (HDI). Except for the oil rich countries, the 49 Muslim-majority countries are, by and large, in the global South. Most of them score low on HDI. South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and China have all disproved the old idea that Buddhism or Confucianism is an obstacle to growth.

The usual blame for persistent poverty used to be laid on population growth. But, recently, the talk is of Malthusian dividend. So, fashions change. It was believed that Hindus are other-worldly, believing in selfless work without regard for rewards. But, even so, India had flourishing financial markets linking the subcontinent centuries before mercantile banking began in Italy. Indeed, it was the ban on usury in the Abrahamic religions that obstructed financial growth. The Italian bankers called themselves money exchangers, not moneylenders.

Many people in the global South would blame the imperialism for retarding growth. While in 1500 CE China and India had the same share of world income as they had of world population, that only meant their per capita income was the same as world average. There were already European countries such as Italy, France, and England that had higher per capita incomes. Imperialism reduced incomes of China and India, but for China, the stagnation had started before the Opium War.

Now, seventy years since the departure of the imperialists, time has come to explain slow growth not in terms of deep unchangeable past, but those of immediate policy failures. Every one in every country would like higher, rather than lower, incomes. If a country fails, it should blame itself, not the past, or religion, or others.

A real test of this proposition may come in India. The income growth is slowing down after twenty years. Is this a blip, or is it a sign of the influence of religion or culture? Is Hindu nationalism good or bad for growth, or just irrelevant?

NRC'S CAB FACE

Chief minister of West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee

If you give citizenship to all the communities, we will accept it. But if you discriminate on the basis of religion, we will oppose it and also fight against it... the CAB and the NRC are two sides of the same coin

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Trigger justice

The killing of the four accused in the case of the rape and murder of a young woman veterinarian by the police of Telangana state when they attempted to flee while being taken to Chatanpally of Shadnagar to reconstruct the crime scene has generated relief and euphoria in equal measure. Yet, the opinion held by rights activists that encounters are meant to capture the accused, especially those who are unarmed, and not to kill them, and there should be accountability for the police cannot be faulted. What should not be forgotten here is the very fact, that sluggishness in police investigation and slow judicial process leading to poor conviction rates in cases concerning sexual violence against women is now leading to a popular opinion in favour of trigger or mob justice. Speedy justice through due process of law in cases of sexual violence against women is the very need of hour.

— M Jeyaram, Sholavandan

GDP growth

RBI confirmed the citizens' worst fears that the country's economy is in the doldrums by cutting FY20 GDP growth forecast to 5%. However, the central bank's decision to leave the repo rate unchanged at 5.15%, hinting that the government must throw its weight, has raised eyebrows. People who had expected a rate cut, considering the gloomy economic scenario, were stumped. Though the government has announced a raft of measures, it appears that the economy is in for the long haul.

— N J Ravi Chander, Bengaluru

● Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

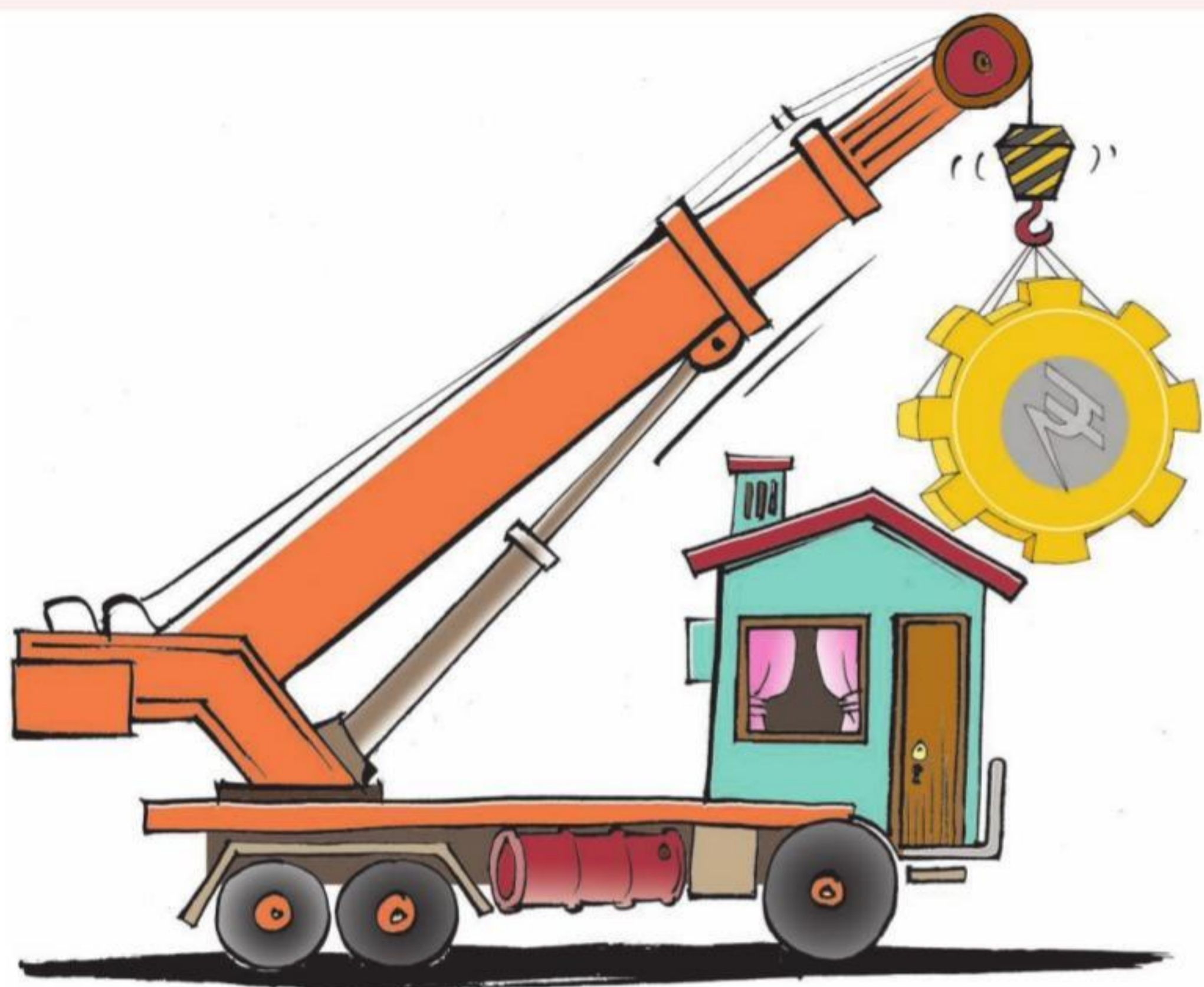


ILLUSTRATION: ROHINIT PHORE

**RAJANI
SINHA**

The author is chief economist & national director, Research, Knight Frank



● ALTERNATIVE INVESTMENT FUND

Real estate is key to economic revival

While the intent of the government is praiseworthy, there are concerns on effectiveness and implementation of the scheme. The fund size of ₹25,000 crore could turn out to be small, relative to the overall requirement of the real estate sector—the sector has unsold inventory worth ₹2.64 lakh crore

WITH POOR ECONOMIC data coming in from all quarters, the government of India has been announcing various reforms and stimulus measures for the economic revival. In this regard, the specific measure for the real estate sector—in the form of the Alternative Investment Fund (AIF) of ₹25,000 crore—is a step in the right direction. The real estate sector plays a very critical role in the economy; it con-

tributes 6-7% to the GDP, apart from being a large employment generator. The health of the real estate sector, in fact, has a strong bearing on consumer sentiments, and housing—as we all know—also has socio-economic implications.

The real estate sector has strong linkages with the core sectors of the economy, such as steel and cement. Core sector growth has decelerated to 1.3% in the fiscal year so far, especially with a sharp deceleration in the cement sector to 0.7% in the period under review. Hence,

a boost to the real estate sector will also help revive growth in the core sector.

In addition, we must not forget the linkages of the real estate sector with the financial sector. Any distress in the real estate sector and the developer's inability to pay their dues could have serious repercussions for the financial sector. In fact, banks' exposure to the real estate sector (through direct and indirect lending) was 21% of total loans and advances (in 2017-18), while the exposure of the non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) to the real estate sector was 6.6% of the total assets. Given that many of the real estate projects are declared NPAs (non-performing assets), under the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) there is a serious threat of real estate woes spreading to the financial sector through defaults.

Currently, the housing projects comprising 4.5 lakh units are unsold. Hence, the government's formation of the AIF to fund the last-mile credit requirement will help ease the logjam in the sector. More importantly, the scheme includes projects that have been declared as NPAs and also those that are under the NCLT, which was not the case when the government had announced the scheme for the real estate sector earlier in September. This last-mile funding avenue for stuck projects, in fact, will be a big relief for the developers as well as the home-buyers committed to these projects.

In the process, the revival in the construction activity will also have a multiplier effect on economic growth given its linkages to various industries. The real estate sector has linkages to a large number of ancillary industries like cement, steel, paints, furniture, copper, sanitary ware, etc.

While the intent of the government is praiseworthy, there are some concerns on effectiveness and implementation of the scheme. The fund size of ₹25,000 crore could turn out to be small, relative to the overall requirement of the real estate sector. The sector has unsold inventory worth ₹2.64 lakh crore. This fund size would only be able to take care of a small proportion of the stalled projects' funding requirement. Moreover, the private investors would be hesitant to join the fund given the risk involved. According to the scheme, any project will not be granted fund of more than ₹400 crore, which may not suffice for some of

the big projects, especially in the NCR (National Capital Region) and the MMR (Mumbai Metropolitan Regions).

The other critical aspect will be the implementation part. The government-released FAQs note that the investment manager can change the developer, if required. Nevertheless, it would be a challenge to manage these projects and bring them to completion. The investment manager will also have to ensure that the fund allocated for a project is not siphoned off to other projects. The timeline for the implementation of the scheme would be critical, as quick implementation would help generate better return for investors.

The government has, in the past also, announced measures to ease credit supply for the real estate sector through steps such as liquidity support for HFCs (housing finance firms) and partial government guarantee for assets purchased by a bank from stressed NBFCs/HFCs.

However, the other critical piece of the puzzle is the demand-side story. The AIF will not be able to generate the required returns unless the demand for real estate also picks up. Otherwise, the increase in supply will further add to the glut in the sector. Even with the real estate sector going through a lull period, housing prices in major markets have only corrected marginally. For instance, in the MMR, residential prices in H1-2019 have only corrected by 3%, while in the NCR these have gone up by 3% (year-on-year)—even though in some micro markets the price correction has been sharp). In fact, high prices and poor economic outlook have resulted in poor housing demand in the economy. Hence, it is very critical that the government also looks into reviving the housing demand in the economy.

The Indian government has already provided income tax deductions for the affordable housing segment. Further measures such as subsidised home loans, full tax exemptions on interest paid on home loans, categorisation of home loans up to ₹1 crore as priority sector lending will help push up overall demand in the sector. Along with easing of supply-side constraints in the real estate sector, there is a need for the government to come up with further measures to trigger demand. Only then will the sector be able to revive in a true sense.

● TRIAGE

Resuscitating the economy

**VIVAN
SHARAN**

Partner, Koan Advisory Group, Delhi, and author of 'Wonked! India in Search of an Economic Ideology'. Views are personal



TRIAGE IS a term used in medicine to indicate the degrees of priority assigned to patients based on the principle of doing the greatest good for the greatest number of people. It originates from French word 'trier' (to sort), dating back to Baron Larrey, a surgeon in Napoleon's army, who employed it to assess and evacuate patients during battles. India can reverse anaemic economic growth by employing triage to identify and implement market reforms on a war-footing—policymakers may consider implementing reform in phases, targeting meaningful measures at less damaged or promising industries.

China seems to have evolved a response to its trade war with the US through 'triage'. Economists predict that a protracted imbroglia involving steep hikes in tariffs and imposition of sanctions may hurt China more than the US. This highlights China's successful integration with the global economy, especially in light of its late entry into the WTO in 2001. Instead of retreat, China's response to deteriorating terms of trade is to implement reforms that enhance global integration of select industries. The 'Regulations on Optimizing Business Environment' passed in October 2019 is an example. The rules, effective January 2020, are aimed at improving the operating environment for foreign investors; innovation-centric companies will also gain. There are three components to triage-like Chinese regulations from which India should draw inspiration.

First, Chinese reforms aim to establish 'open' and 'competitive' modern markets. Such objectives seem counterintuitive for a state that often imposes trade barriers to protect local industries. However, a commitment to openness is a prerequisite to inspire investor confidence, which is at historic lows in China and India. India could signal intent through clear messaging in its consolidated FDI policy. Instead, it has reduced openness to FDI in new markets. In August, India imposed a limit of 26% on FDI in digital media related to 'news and current affairs'. It's a confusing signal to give investors in a vibrant industry. A reversal from the previous allowance of 100% FDI in digital media also shows lack of an economic ideology.

Second, China aims to establish higher enforcement standards and rapid dispute resolution mechanisms, to enhance IP protection. It realises that the core strength of the US economy, its main rival, stems from strategic development and deployment of IP. The much-quoted example of Apple's royalties from the production of the iPhone in China is now part of the global value chain (GVC) folklore. At their core, GVCs represent the simultaneous fragmentation of production and concentration of IP. In contrast, India has never paid attention to IP-centric industries, despite their innate resilience to economic headwinds and increasing relevance in the services sector. For instance, domestic media and entertainment industries powered by strong IP are still growing at 13%. India is one of the fastest growing markets for digital segments such as video-on-demand and music streaming, with subscriptions to related digital services growing by 250% between 2018 and 2019. These industries are also globally competitive since digitalisation eases infrastructural barriers to trade. Yet India has done little to promote IP. This is visible in lack of specialisation in IP tribunals. In fact, a permanent office for the Intellectual Property Appellate Board was only established in 2014, after the state was sued for not providing it with adequate resources.

Lastly, China has committed to solicit public opinion on economic regulations and publicise rules and regulations that impact 'market entities' to build an environment of transparency. This is an area where India can better become. While some Indian regulators and ministries have become adept at public consultations, the boundaries of 'public interest' across regulated markets are seldom open to debate. 'Digital sovereignty' is the latest such construct that guides government decision-making in new markets, without adequate explanation of its economic benefits. China, a historically-closed economy, recognises the value of transparency by employing triage. India, too, should pick up a cue.

China, which is a historically-closed economy, has, of late, recognised the value of employing 'triage'. India, too, should pick up the cue

DECISION MAKING IS the process to select a course of action from a number of alternatives. Like planning, decision making also requires features like forecasting and action plans. For any organisation, policy documents help in taking managerial decisions. But these are decisions of routine nature, which we also call operational decisions. Strategic or important decisions are obviously taken after considering different alternatives. In order to be a successful manager, one has to necessarily develop decision-making skills.

What is a decision cycle? It is a sequence of steps used by an organisation on a repeated basis to reach and implement decisions; not necessarily each decision adds to profits, but organisations must learn from mistakes made by them. For growth and sustainability, a decision relies on decision cycle. The 'decision cycle' is a phrase is used to broadly categorise various methods of making decisions, going upstream to the need, downstream to the outcomes, and cycling around to connect the outcomes to the needs.

Understanding that organisations go through a specific decision-making process allows business firms and manufacturing-related goods and services to develop programmes designed to influence each stage of the business process.

All businesses operate around certain business process cycles. It refers to various trends that occur within an industry/sector, such as growth or withering. Many a time, management decisions are impacted

Using decision cycle for precision

It is a sequence of steps used by an organisation on a repeated basis to reach and implement decisions

**VIDYA
HATTANGADI**

The author is a management thinker and blogger



by where the company stands in reference to a particular cycle. Macro economy also plays an important role in management decisions. When the economy is in a cycle of withdrawal, the management of a firm will act conservatively, whereas in a cycle of expansion, management may tend to act more aggressively to gain as much market share as possible.

Characteristics of business cycle

Usually, any business faces four distinct trends: slowdown, bottom, growth, peak. All businesses, even the most aggressive sales firms, experience these cycles. A slowdown occurs after a market has experienced a normal period of expansion. This is

often followed by a period of sales maturity and product integration by the existing customer base, which is viewed as a slowdown. During a slowdown, competition enters the market that also creates weaker sales. Finally, the business hits a bottom. After this bottom and rough period, business gets aggressive and makes steps of expansion and marketing efforts to aggressively go after new market share. Following this period of expansion, business will again begin to see a peak in performance and start the cycle all over.

The examples of decision cycle are: **OODA loop:** This tool was coined in the 1950s by US Air Force colonel and military strategist John Boyd as a way to illustrate



the action and decision cycle that a fighter pilot goes through during an aerial dogfight; it has since been applied to disciplines as diverse as business, medicine, law and the acquisition process in the military. The quality and speed of those decisions get enhanced by new command-and-control precepts and advances in information, surveillance and reconnaissance tools, sensors and systems. As a result, military forces have been improving on their ability to observe, orient, decide and attack, better known as the OODA loop.

PDCA (plan-do-check-act): It was made popular by Dr W Edwards Deming, considered the father of modern quality control. Based on scientific method, PDCA

can be better explained as "hypothesis" that can be proved under statistical control as a three-step process of specification, production and inspection. It can be specified as a scientific method of hypothesis, experiment and evaluation. According to Dr Deming, during his lectures in Japan in the early 1950s, the Japanese participants shortened the steps to the now traditional plan, do, check and act.

Herbert Simon Model: The field of decision support systems was pioneered by Herbert Simon. According to Simon and his work with Allen Newell, decision making has distinct stages. He suggested for the first time the decision-making model of humans. It has three stages: Intelligence

which deals with problem identification and data collection on the problem; design which deals with the generation of alternative solutions to the problem at hand; and choice which is selecting the "best" solution from amongst the alternative solutions using some criterion. Later, other scholars expanded his framework to five steps (Intelligence-Design-Choice-Implementation-Learning).

Business Analytics: It refers to the skills, technologies, practices for continuously connecting exploration and investigation of past business performance to gain insight and drive business planning. BA focuses on developing new insights and understanding of business performance based on data and statistical methods. In contrast, business intelligence traditionally focuses on using a consistent set of metrics to both measure past performance and guide business planning, which is also based on data and statistical methods.

Design thinking: It refers to cognitive, strategic and practical processes by which design concepts, proposals for new products, buildings, machines, etc, are developed by designers. Many key concepts and aspects of design thinking have been identified through studies of design cognition and design activity in both laboratory and natural contexts. Design thinking includes "building up" ideas, with few or no limits. This helps reduce fear of failure among managers; it encompasses processes such as context analysis, problem finding and framing, ideation and solution, generating, creative thinking, sketching and drawing and portraying and evaluating.



*The Indian***EXPRESS**

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Milestone Maharashtra



ASHUTOSH VARSHNEY

Political power is bringing about an ideological re-orientation in the players which may or may not endure

DON'T CRY FOR ONIONS

Avoid knee-jerk reactions to temporary shortage-induced price spikes. Government must focus on deeper problems

ONIONS CONTINUE to burn consumer pockets, notwithstanding several firefighting measures deployed by the Narendra Modi government. Since September-end, exports (annually worth almost \$500 million) have been banned, stock limits imposed on the trade (wholesalers cannot keep more than 25 tonnes and retailers 5 tonnes), the state-owned MMTC Ltd ordered to import one lakh tonnes (lt) and the requirement of fumigation against pest and disease at the country of exports relaxed. If all these actions — the income tax department is even conducting nationwide raids on traders to probe any holding of unaccounted stocks — haven't stopped retail onion prices from doubling to Rs 100-per-kg levels in the last two months, the primary culprit is clearly not “hoarding”, but production. Kharif onion sowings were, this time, affected by deficient monsoon rainfall till late-July. Even the crop that was planted suffered damage from excess rains, especially after September and extending to November. As a result, the total kharif and late-kharif onion output is officially down nearly 18 lt or 26 per cent; the actual decline could be more.

But it isn't just onions. This year's unusual combination of early-season drought and prolonged unseasonal rains around the time of harvesting has taken a toll on most kharif crops. Pulses, soyabean and maize, among others, are trading significantly higher than last year. Dairies, too, are procuring less, even as the cost of milk has gone up. While some of that is due to a slow start to the “flush” season — animals generally produce more after October, which again has been disrupted by an extended monsoon — there might be structural reasons as well. Low milk realisations of the past 3-4 years have forced many farmers to reduce herd sizes and underfeed their cattle, particularly calves and pregnant/non-lactating females. Its effects are showing now, with skimmed milk powder rates crossing Rs 300 per kg, from Rs 140-150 a year ago. Simply put, the period of low consumer food inflation — an average of 1.38 per cent year-on-year from September 2016 to August 2019, unprecedented in India — is over.

That, however, isn't necessarily bad news. Ultra-low inflation isn't sustainable or even in consumer interest, if it disincentivises producers. The current price increases, after discounting for weather aberrations or factors specific to onion, are more of a correction. Price recovery, combined with the best monsoon rains in 25 years that have filled up all major reservoirs and substantially recharged groundwater tables, will spur ongoing rabi plantings. That would, in all likelihood, yield a bumper harvest and more than compensate for any kharif shortfalls. There can be nothing better for the economy today than rural incomes bouncing back. And there can be nothing worse than knee-jerk policy reactions to temporary shortage-induced price spikes. The Modi government should focus on problems that shall not pass as easily as onions.

SMALL AND INCLUSIVE

New approach to granting licences to small finance and payment banks is welcome, will make sector more competitive

INDIA'S CENTRAL BANK has often been criticised for being too conservative when it comes to lifting the entry barriers for new players in the banking sector. Three years after the RBI approved licences to 10 small finance banks, the regulator has now issued the final guidelines for licensing such banks throughout the year or on tap, encouraged presumably by the performance of some of these entities. The bar has been raised for new entrants in terms of higher capital requirements — Rs 200 crore now from Rs 100 crore earlier — besides stiffer prudential norms on a continuing basis and a mandatory requirement to list after three years when the net worth tops Rs 500 crore. The new approach to granting differentiated licences to small finance banks and payment banks is welcome, especially given the current context where the established full service large banks are scaling back their franchises to reduce expenditure and in light of the collateral impact of the planned mergers of some of the state-owned banks.

Small finance banks have the potential to provide an alternative to some of the existing institutions with their mandated focus on small and medium businesses, the informal sector, small and marginal farmers and thus on increasing financial inclusion and serving a variety of unserved clients in the hinterland and tier three and four cities and towns. The RBI itself has said that a review of the performance of small finance banks shows that they have achieved their priority sector targets and attained the mandate for furthering financial inclusion, building a strong case for the entry of more players. Early reports, too, indicate that though these banks account for less than 0.5 per cent of total deposits and less than a per cent of total advances, many of them have been growing their loan book at a good clip. But where these new institutions — quite a few of which are former MFIs — are going to be tested is not just in building a brand franchise but also in ensuring relatively low-cost operations by diversifying their loan portfolios and lowering the old legacy loan stock and wholesale deposits, which can be costly and putting in place robust technology platforms and modern risk management systems.

The experience of the last two decades has shown that a competitive banking system can help foster a more inclusive financial sector. Small finance banks could well occupy the space being gradually vacated by some of the bigger banks and complement them too in segments such as micro and small businesses and the informal sector. Their success will, however, be contingent on asset quality, the trust they are able to build progressively, the level and standards of governance and regulatory oversight.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



THE RECENT political events in Maharashtra have received extensive commentary. The degree of attention reflects two different dimensions, which need to be highlighted.

The first is the towering significance of the state. After the break-up of Bihar into two units in 2000, Maharashtra has not only become the second most populous state of the country, but its capital, the city of Mumbai, continues to be the greatest contributor to political finance. We cannot prove the latter with statistical exactitude, but no observer of Indian politics can deny it.

Compared to their past, Delhi and Bangalore have become many times richer over the last three decades, but they still can't match the wealth of Mumbai. So long as politics and business remain deeply intertwined, as they do in India, to rule Maharashtra is to have an enormous hold over Mumbai's financial clout. The BJP's unseemly midnight power grab reflected this reality. New York city, to which Mumbai is compared in many quarters, does not play the same role in the US, though it to some extent did during America's Gilded Age (1865-1900), a period associated with the nation's enormous economic rise.

It is the second dimension of the Maharashtra developments, which calls for greater reflection. Just what does the break-up of the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance, lasting for three decades, and the emergence of a Shiv Sena-Congress alliance, signify? Note that I have left out the NCP from a fuller consideration. The NCP could have gone either way. It represents a regionalist sentiment. Beyond that, it has no great ideological core. It can justify any alliance on the argument that Maharashtra's interests require such a move.

In contrast, the Shiv Sena is strongly ideological, associated with an anti-Muslim stance since the late 1980s, and the Congress, though not as ideologically resolute as in the past, is irreducibly multireligious. The Congress has, of late, gravitated towards a greater show of Hindu religiosity, but it finds it hard to, or cannot, break its reliance on Muslims. In the 2019 parliamentary elections, it received 38 per cent of the Muslim vote, larger than its share of any other social category. The alliance of an anti-Muslim Shiv Sena and a pro-Muslim

In every state election between 1990 and 2004, the Sena won more seats than the BJP; in 2009, both were roughly equal; but after Modi's rise, the BJP has completely dwarfed the Sena. In 2014 and 2019, the BJP won 122 and 105 seats respectively, as against Sena's 63 and 56. The basic political message is clear. The alliance has been a bigger boon to the BJP than to the Sena, and it is impossible to match Modi's Hindutva credentials. For the sake of future growth and political power, the Sena needs another re-incarnation.



SONAL GUPTA

“NOBODY EXISTS ON purpose. Nobody belongs anywhere. We're all going to die. Come watch TV,” says a dejected Morty to his sister, in the animated series, *Rick and Morty*, on Netflix. The popularity of the show, currently in its fourth season, has much to do with its protagonists who travel through the multiverse looking for adventures. Rick Sanchez is an alcoholic misanthrope whose unswerving faith in science and staunch denial of a higher being reminds you of Nietzsche's often-quoted phrase — “God is dead.”

Existentialists realise that though individuals recognise the insignificance of existence, they still search for meaning in their life. Albert Camus would call this the “absurd” — comparing humanity's quest for “purpose” to the myth of Sisyphus, who is cursed to roll a boulder up the mountain, only to have it roll back down, unto infinity.

This philosophy spread after the end of the world wars. As young men turned into murdering soldiers and the atomic bomb destroyed cities, people were left questioning the sanctity of human life, which could be so easily annihilated. The individual in advanced industrial, urban societies felt a deep sense of alienation. While the horrors of mass murder could explain the descent of humanity into an “existential crisis”, the recent rise of existentialism in millennial culture — through shows or memes, points to a contemporary “tragedy of our times”.

Perhaps, the tragedy lies in what Aru-

MILLENNIAL ANGST

We are in an existential crisis. We are also reclaiming a sense of purpose



The world we inhabit is dying. The polar ice caps are melting, global debt is at its highest and countries are beset with violence. Right-wing exponents, the preservers of ‘convention’, are gaining popularity. No wonder, ‘Ok boomer’ became the millennial turn of phrase.

Congress simply could not have been predicted. Why have they come together?

Let us start historically. The Shiv Sena, in its early days, was ideologically multidimensional. In their published works, Dipankar Gupta, Ram Joshi, Mary Katzenstein and Usha Thakkar have demonstrated that the Shiv Sena's original ideological framework, constructed by Bal Thackeray in the late 1960s, comprised at least three planks: Jobs for Maharashtrians in Mumbai, anti-Communism and opposition to Muslims. It rose to prominence in Mumbai on the basis of the first two, and the anti-Muslim plank was a distinct third. The Shiv Sena's original targets were the South Indians, who had captured jobs due to their superior skills, and the Marxist labour unions, which dominated Bombay's industrial landscape.

By the mid-1980s, the party needed an ideological rebalancing. Leftist labour unions had declined and South Indians were only significant in Bombay, whereas the Shiv Sena wanted power at the state level, not simply in the Bombay Municipal Corporation. As the Sena hitched its fortunes with the BJP-led Ayodhya movement in the late 1980s, what was distinctly third became primary, bringing it eventually to power at the state level in an alliance with the BJP.

It is this second phase of the party's evolution that appears to have come to an end. In every state election between 1990 and 2004, the Sena won more seats than the BJP; in 2009, both were roughly equal; but after Modi's rise, the BJP has dwarfed the Sena. In 2014 and 2019, the BJP won 122 and 105 seats, as against Sena's 63 and 56. The basic political message is clear. The alliance has been a bigger boon to the BJP than to the Sena, and it is impossible to match Modi's Hindutva credentials. For the sake of future growth and political power, the Sena needs another re-incarnation.

In the Sena's ideological arsenal, regionalism was already present. It used to be said that Mumbai was in Maharashtra, but Maharashtra was not in Mumbai, reflecting the paradox between Mumbai's regional location and its all-India migrant labour force. The Sena can now say that Maharashtra is also not in Maharashtra, for the employment cri-

sis of the Modi era is bound to hurt Maharashtrians more, given the customary educational lead of the migrants over the locals. The idea of 80 per cent jobs for Maharashtrians is a statewide reinvention of the Sena's 1960s' battle cry. The demand, then, was for 80 per cent of Bombay jobs.

A second ideological platform also needs invigoration. The Sena can't grow if it only remains, or is viewed as, an urban party. It needs an agrarian programme, which the NCP can easily add to its pool, and for which the ongoing agrarian crisis provides an opening.

In short, the disintegration of the BJP-Sena alliance is driven by two characteristics of the Modi era. First, having two champions of the anti-Muslim platform has run into decreasing returns for the Sena, while hugely benefiting the BJP. Second, the economic crisis, which the Modi government continues to deny, is beginning to provide anti-BJP opportunities, at least at the state level.

The challenge for the Congress was, of course, more existential. Its two awful and successive national defeats have had a hugely demoralising effect, creating a profound organisational crisis. But the logic of Modi's politics has also provided an unexpected opening in a hugely important state, which it would be foolish to let go. It is unclear at this point that the Sena will fully abandon Hindutva. Normally, it takes time to reorient politics. The Republican Party was a party of African Americans for decades after the American Civil War. It is now a predominantly White party. The transformation took very long.

The key question is: How badly does the Sena want power? If it wishes to remain in power for the foreseeable future, it can't return to full-blooded Hindutva, or it will be a junior partner in a BJP-based alliance. Political power has a way of bringing about ideological reorientation. This proposition will now be tested in Maharashtra.

The writer is director, Center for Contemporary South Asia, Sol Goldman Professor of International Studies and Social Sciences, professor of political science, Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, Brown University

any succour, for the moment at least. A dysfunctional economic system makes it hard to find jobs that do not exploit or undermine our skills. Long working hours and disproportionately low wages keep pushing us towards a start-up culture, the stability of which remains debatable. Instability in life leads to disruptions in relationships. More so for non-heteronormatives, who must fight for their identities as well. Stress, anxiety and depression have entered our daily vocabulary.

Our generation is often, and if I might add, unfairly, construed as entitled and lazy. However, university students and young adults around the world are out on the streets fighting for what they believe in, their endeavours accelerated by social media. Hong Kong is witnessing a siege against the Chinese “occupation” and university students have been active participants. In Chile, students led the strike against an increase in subway fares, and, closer to home, we are fighting the fee hike in JNU for affordable education in public universities.

Perhaps the recent protests, pride-walks and climate change demonstrations signify the millennials' reclamation of “purpose” in life after all, as they seek to upset, if not overturn, the conventional order of things.

The writer, 22, is pursuing a Masters in journalism at the Symbiosis Institute of Media and Communication. She was an intern at The Indian Express

DECEMBER 9, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

SANJAY FACTOR

DESPITE REPEATED ASSERTIONS by Indira Gandhi about her son's non-interference in the affairs of her party, the “Sanjay factor” is reportedly influencing the selection of Congress (I) candidates significantly. Three of the remaining four party candidates from Delhi, whose names were announced on December 8, are understood to be nominees of Mrs Gandhi's son. Jagdish Tytler, who has been selected for a Sadar seat and Sajjan Kumar, who has been named for Outer Delhi were among the Youth Congress volunteers in the forefront for implementation of Sanjay's five-point programme during the Emergency. Dharm Das Shastri, who has

been selected for the Karol Bagh reserved seat is also a staunch supporter and was also active during the Emergency.

PRESIDENT'S RULE

ASSAM IS LIKELY to be brought under President's Rule. The governor for Northeastern states, LP Singh, is understood to have informed New Delhi of the ministerial crisis created by the decision of the 22-member Congress Legislative Party and the six-member CPI parliamentary group to withdraw support to the Assam Janata Dal ministry, which has reduced it to a minority government. The governor has viewed with concern the virtual collapse of the state ad-

ministrative machinery as a result of the series of bandhs and the picketing by satyagrahis to press for postponement of elections till the names of “foreign nationals” are deleted from the electoral rolls.

CARTER CAUTIOUS

PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER told families of American hostages held in Iran that “I am not going to take any military action that would cause bloodshed or rouse the unstable captors of our hostages to attack them or to punish them. It is going to be very moderate, very cautious. Our purpose is to get the hostages home and get them safe. That is our total commitment”.



First Pawar test

Maharashtra's farmers need a new deal. A task force must be set up under the NCP chief



FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH
BY ASHOK GULATI AND SHYMA JOSE

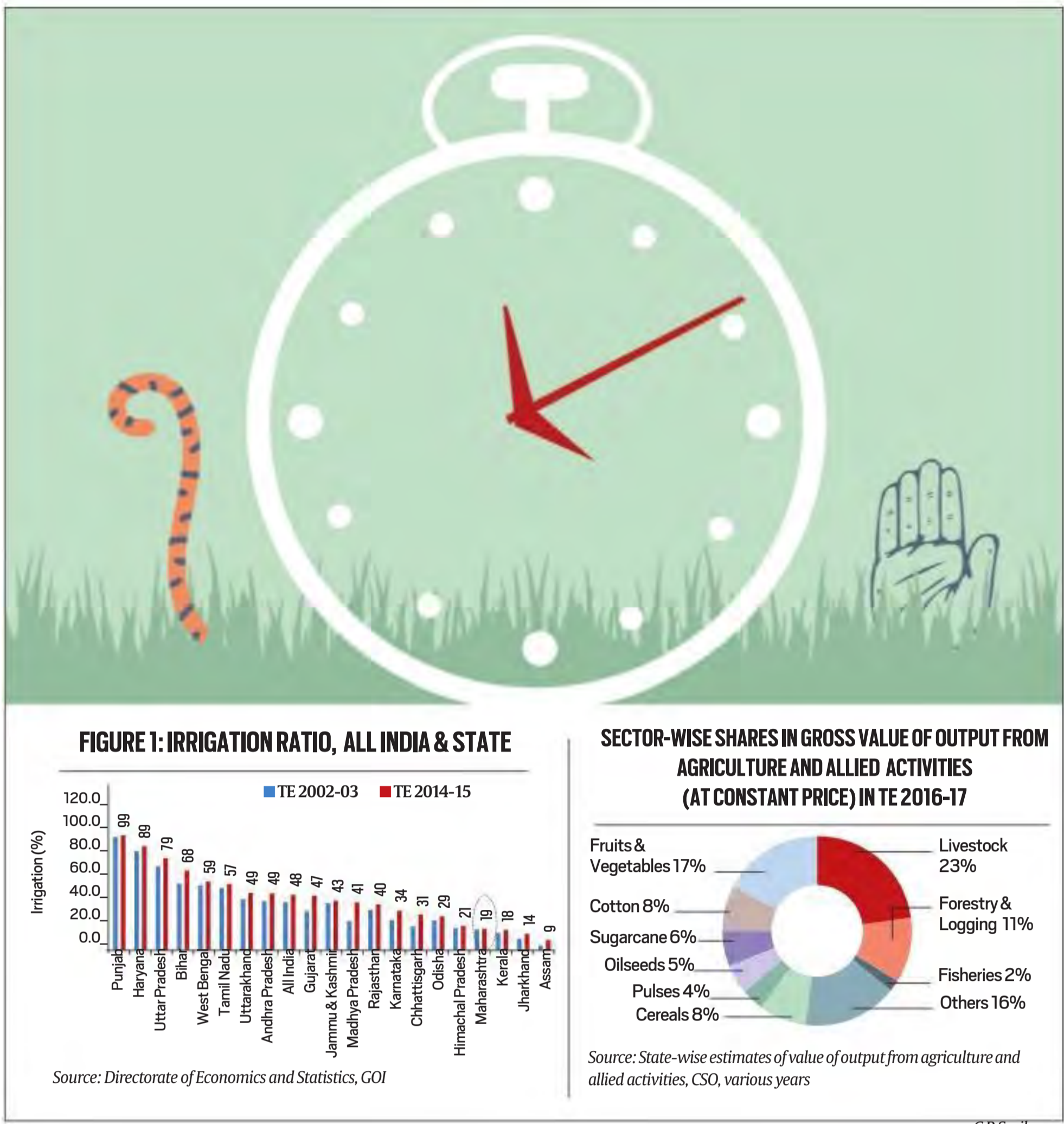
FROM THE TUMULTUOUS developments that took place in Maharashtra's politics over the past three weeks, one thing came out clearly: Everyone swears they want to help farmers first. Devendra Fadnis's 80-hour government sanctioned Rs 5,830 crore from the Maharashtra Contingency Fund to give relief to farmers affected by unseasonal rains. One wonders what happened to the crop insurance scheme if the money had to finally come from the state exchequer. The Shiv Sena-NCP-Congress coalition has declared that it wants to announce something bigger for farmers very soon. But before doing that, it wants to first map and assess the various schemes linked to farmers. That's a wise decision. And given that Sharad Pawar is the senior-most leader of the ruling alliance, it is a golden chance for Maharashtra to frame an agricultural policy that can serve as a lighthouse for many other states.

Maharashtra's peasants have been in the news quite often for the wrong reasons: The high incidence of farmers' suicides. While a little less than 10 per cent of India's population resides in Maharashtra, it accounted for 41 per cent of farmers' suicides in the country as per the latest 2016 data. Although suicides are a complex sociological phenomenon, yet it perhaps reflects the high levels of stress in agriculture. Early action is needed on two fronts. First, on the issues of irrigation and water use management, and second, building globally competitive value chains for major agri-commodities of the state, from farm to fork.

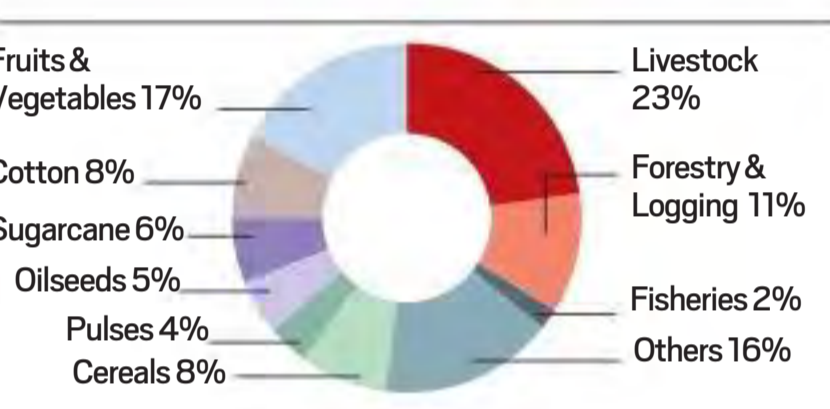
One of the key problems in Maharashtra's agriculture is the low irrigation ratio. It stood at just 19 per cent for the triennium average ending (TE) 2014-15, as compared to 48 per cent at the all-India level (Figure 1). Ironically, during TE 2002-03 to TE 2014-15, the irrigation ratio increased only by one percentage point.

As of June 2017, the irrigation potential created (IPC) by Maharashtra's Water Resource Department (WRD) stood at 50.4 lakh hectares, while the irrigation potential utilised (IPU) was only 39.5 lakh hectares, or 78.4 per cent (Economic Survey of Maharashtra, 2018-19). Massive public investments are needed to decrease the IPC-IPU gap, but that seems like a distant goal given the high leakages in the irrigation projects. The NABARD-ICRIER study on "Getting More from Less" by Gulati and others (2019) has estimated that the capital cost of major and medium irrigation (MMI) schemes in Maharashtra was the highest in the country at Rs 13.5 lakh/hectare of IPC compared to the all-India average cost of Rs 4.5 lakh/hectare. The cost per hectare of IPU is even higher at Rs 20.4 lakh/hectare. Given the alarmingly high capital cost in public irrigation, it is important to ensure transparency and accountability before any more money is put in public irrigation, else that money will also disappear as water disappears in sand.

Ensuring better use of irrigation water is perhaps even more important than investing more in MMI schemes. Water guzzling crops like sugarcane (remember one kg of sugar needs 2,300 litres of water), which occupy less than 4 per cent of cropped area, are entirely irrigated and take away 65 per cent of the irrigation water of the state. On the other



SECTOR-WISE SHARES IN GROSS VALUE OF OUTPUT FROM AGRICULTURE AND ALLIED ACTIVITIES (AT CONSTANT PRICE) IN TE 2016-17



C R Sasikumar

Onion, which is on the boil today, also deserves investment in modern storage and processing de-hydrated flakes, which can reduce wastage. Maharashtra is the largest producer of onions, with a third of India's production.

Maharashtra has already opened up private mandis to ensure competition and fair trade, but more needs to be done for building efficient commodity-specific value-chains that connect FPOs to best markets — be it organised retailers, food processors or exporters. The state needs to embark on a special drive to promote contract farming, and the opening up of land-leasing markets.

The livestock sector also deserves more processing plants for value added products that will help farmers realise better prices for their produce. Value addition in more organised value-chains could be the mantra for the agricultural transformation of the state.

The common minimum programme worked out between the Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress has lifted hopes that the farming community in the state may get a better deal. But, to realise these hopes, one needs a good strategy that recognises constraints on the supply side (especially water) but also taps into the potential on the demand side through FPOs run specific commodity value-chains. Maybe setting up a high-level special task force under Sharad Pawar's direction could see this potential actually realised for peasants.

Gulati is Infosys chair professor for agriculture and Jose is research associate at ICRIER

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Without common interests, NATO is destined to fail. It would be a serious blunder to regard the China topic as a ventilator for NATO to survive."
— GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

What JNU represents

It is a one-of-a-kind post-graduate university. That is also why it is being targeted



SUBHASHIS BANERJEE

RECENTLY, THE EXTENT of subsidies in publicly funded universities has received quite a bit of attention. Not only did JNU propose to roughly double the fees for its PhD and masters students, but even the IIT Council, while doing away with the stipend scheme, has tentatively decided to increase the MTech fees by nearly 10 times. While, the IIT step is ostensibly motivated towards deterring unviable legacy masters programmes of little interest to the industry and move towards more attractive industry sponsored programmes, understanding the provocations at JNU has not been easy.

It is well understood that the burden of high loans limits the choices of graduating students, and narrows the spaces for their intellectual explorations. This, in turn, hurts the society. Post-graduate research is usually fully supported everywhere in the world. Boarding and lodging charges are either directly subsidised, or are factored into the stipend or assistantship. At a stipend of Rs 8,000 per month, which most of the post-graduate scholars at JNU receive, the proposed increases are bound to pinch.

Post-graduate research, especially PhD research, cannot be self-financed anywhere because that will necessitate subsequent remuneration with high salaries, forcing research to be entirely market driven and killing the spirit of free enquiry. Parents supporting post-graduate studies is also a bad idea. One needs independence at that age for any kind of free thinking to be possible. Post-graduate research must be supported by research grants, whenever feasible, either from public or private sources, as is common in the sciences, engineering, economics or finance.

However, it is hard to envisage industry funding research in areas not directly of interest to them, for example, in philosophy, particle physics, topology or geometry or even in climate change, pollution, poverty mapping, history, gender studies or socio-economic understanding of public health, except as philanthropy in a limited way. Developing understanding in topics such as these is crucial for society and humanity, and it is therefore essential to internally support them to the extent possible by publicly funded universities.

This is where JNU plays a crucial role, especially in the areas of social and political sciences. It is a one-of-a-kind post-graduate university in the country that has promoted inter-disciplinary research and a vibrant culture of free enquiry, where learning outside the classroom has been as important as inside, and where it has been possible to challenge every doctrine and discuss it democratically. Moreover, JNU has set exemplary standards for an inclusive admission policy that extends beyond the mandatory reservations to affirmative action for gender and other marginalised categories, including for backward regions. The resulting diversity is enriching and must be celebrated rather than attacked.

Students from JNU have not only moved

to conventional careers in the civil services, armed forces, academics and in journalism, but some have also opted for active politics and other forms of activism. JNU can boast of producing a significant number of educated politicians, and there are at least two even in the current central cabinet of ministers. There can be no doubt that there is scope for improvement, including in research, but the same can be said about most other things. It certainly is not the case that JNU is the most broken thing in the country that requires urgent and violent fixing. Fees and stipends require periodic adjustments in any university. But the sudden raising of fees without adequate consultations, and the continual unduly combative posture of the administration is more indicative of waging a war on what JNU represents, rather than nurturing and shaping it with sagacious insight. The unusual belligerence may have something to do with the unfortunate tax-payers' perception of JNU as a den of "useless sociologists", "leftists" and even "anti-nationals". Such simplistic and illogical calumny is all the more reason for supporting more such publicly funded centres of liberal education and research.

In contrast, the IITs have turned to seek their relevance from university rankings rather than from original impactful contributions in engineering, sciences, public policy and education. Projecting wonderfully multidimensional entities like universities onto straight lines to enforce linear ordering is conceptually flawed, and is a fundamentally mistaken way of seeking excellence that leads to faulty reward models and bio-data engineering.

The IIT system has produced some top-class academics, researchers and students, and they have indeed made sporadic outstanding contributions of both fundamental and applied nature. However, sustained high quality response, either to fundamental questions, or to societal imperatives such as climate change, public health, clean water, pollution, digitisation and society, have, at best, been muted. This is mainly because of faulty metrics and failure to define collective priorities and action groups.

While industry-sponsored research in public universities is crucial, not all research and higher education can be market driven. Publicly-funded universities also have the responsibility to train people to ask fundamental questions not of immediate interest to the industry, but to identify and conduct independent enquiry of societal problems, provide directions, and, if required, raise voices of dissent if policies go awry. Public funding of higher education is thus crucial for any society. And, ultimately, education needs to be free and equitable for all, even if not subsidised.

Of course, the requirements of higher education need to be balanced against the even more fundamental demands of primary and general college education for all. This is where prioritisation and policy making becomes crucial, and the strategic response and guidance from our academic leadership — both in our universities, and in our policy making bodies — need to become more thoughtful. And the education budget, still amongst the lowest in the world (as a percentage of the GDP) needs to go up significantly.

The writer is associated with the computer science and engineering department and the school of public policy, IIT Delhi

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SENA'S CHALLENGE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Sena on test' (IE, December 5). Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's announcement to review several big ticket infrastructure projects is wholly unwarranted. It is the prerogative of every government to review all schemes pursued by its predecessor government in pursuance of public interest. But no such reasoning have been given by the Maharashtra CM. The Sena was party to such decisions as an ally of BJP in the previous government.

Ravi Mathur Ghaziabad

LINKED HISTORIES

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'A Mughal prince and the pandits of Benares' (IE, December 5). It was heartening to read the story of Dara Shukoh who stands as a testimony to tolerance and pluralism in our increasingly polarised society. His stellar work *Sirr-i-Akbar* helped many Hindus access their own sacred texts and is a reminder that the histories of Hindus and Muslims are inextricably entwined.

Sangeeta Kampani, Delhi

GST WOES

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Slowdown pain' (IE, December 5). With

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian Express offers the Letter of the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to editpage@expressindia.com or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301.

private expenditure and fresh capex investment coming to a halt, public expenditure is the saviour for the day. States are within their rights to seek compensation and one of them, Kerala has even threatened to go to the Supreme Court if the Centre does not pay up. Reducing the number of tax slabs and bringing down many items from highest slab will go a long way in fine tuning the GST process and may lead to an increase in GST collection as well. The GST council should streamline the filing process.

Bal Govind, Noida

VIEW FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD



A weekly look at the public conversations shaping ideas beyond borders — in the Subcontinent. Curated by Aakash Joshi

THE PALESTINE EXAMPLE

WHILE LAST MONTH, the focus in the Pakistan press was the proposed extension of Army Chief General Qamar Bajwa's tenure and its supreme court's ruling on the matter along with other domestic issues such as corruption, the spotlight seems to have shifted back to Kashmir to some extent.

In its December 8 editorial — 'Relentless Tyranny' — Dawn marks four months since the communication blockade was imposed in Jammu and Kashmir. Much of the editorial is a repetition of the line espoused by the newspaper over the last four months: "...the people of the forsaken Valley suffocate under India's stifling restrictions"; "thousands remain incarcerated under flimsy pretences"; "Farooq Abdullah, Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti — all former chief ministers of the held region — remain in detention along with other lawmakers, demonstrating that the BJP clique in New Delhi doesn't even trust those that never tired of siding with India".

What is interesting is a direct analogy between the suffering inflicted by Israel on Palestinians over the years, which too shows no sign of relenting, and the situation in the Valley: "It would not be wrong

to compare the situation in occupied Kashmir to the miserable plight of the Palestinian enclave of Gaza, where similar restrictions on fundamental rights are enforced by the Israeli military machine. Perhaps this is not coincidental, as an Indian diplomat in the US was recently quoted as saying that his country should follow the 'Israeli model' in Kashmir; it is evident that quite a few of Tel Aviv's brutal tactics are being replicated by the Hinduva-infused government in New Delhi."

The statement by India's consul-general to the US, Sandeep Chakravorty, ("why don't we follow the Israel model") also provides fodder to the argument made by Moonis Ahmar in *The Express Tribune* on December 6. "For the first time a senior Indian diplomat has called for establishing Hindu enclaves," writes Ahmar, "similar to the illegal Jewish settlements in the Israel-occupied West Bank". Ahmar, an international and strategic affairs scholar, does provide something of a caveat: "Although his statement was heavily criticised in India and by the Pakistani Prime Minister, it reflects the prevailing mindset in the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) about the demographic transformation in the Muslim-majority Kashmir Valley."

Ahmar then describes the modalities and immoralities of Israel's occupation and points out that many Kashmiri pandits too are against the "demographic change" that permitting all Indians to buy land in Kashmir would allow. He ends by pointing out that despite its efforts, Pakistan has been unable to change New Delhi's position on Kashmir, or have the latter face any serious consequences in international fora: "Pakistan is unable to effectively challenge New Delhi because of its fragile economy, political polarisation and gaps in policy and action. Pakistan should have hit when the iron was hot. Does it mean Pakistan has lost Kashmir for good?"

ONION WOES

THE ONLY COUNTRY suffering as much, if not more, than India from the soaring prices of onions is Nepal. In its December 7 editorial, *The Kathmandu Post* flags the tremendous shortage of onions, and analyses its causes and effects.

First, the cause: "When India faced an erratic and late monsoon, much like Nepal did, farmers lost a bulk of their onion crop. As prices for shallots, onions and other varieties rose, the Indian government put a

ban on the export of the vegetable on September 29 and has extended it to February 2020 at least. The current price hike and shortage Nepal feels is a direct effect of Delhi's export ban."

One reason for the onion becoming ubiquitous in Nepali cuisine — it was not always so — is changing food habits, new ways of cooking meat, etc. While in the short term, the country is trying to offset the shortage through imports from China, these varieties have few takers as Indian onions are largely preferred.

The editorial proposes a long-term solution to such crises as well: "The government must support the promotion of multiple import-export channels: the 2015 blockade, the sporadic Nepali ginger barriers and the current onion crisis show that New Delhi will not put its neighbour's need before its own. What it also shows is how Nepal is a hostage to a single trade partner. In the long run, Nepal must promote a diverse agriculture basket at home to sustain its food needs. Moreover, the diversity of local cuisine and the variety of regional ingredients must be celebrated. Not everyone needs to have rice as a staple, and neither does every Nepali require onions in their chicken."

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 251

जीएसटी में सुधार

ऐसी खबरें हैं कि वस्तु एवं सेवा कर (जीएसटी) परिषद, जिसमें राज्यों और केंद्र के वित्त मंत्री शामिल होते हैं और जो जीएसटी की निगरानी करती है, वह अप्रत्यक्ष कर ढांचे की समीक्षा करने पर विचार कर रही है।

खासतौर पर जैसा कि इस समाचार पत्र ने लिखा भी था कि 5 फीसदी की दर को

बढ़ाकर 6 फीसदी किया जा सकता है। सरकार को उम्मीद है कि इससे कर का प्रभाव बढ़ेगा। फिलहाल यह 1.2 लाख करोड़ मासिक के तय लक्ष्य से काफी कम है। परंतु निचली कर दर में मामूली इजाफा करके इस कमी को पूरा नहीं किया जा सकता। ऐसा इसलिए क्योंकि 5 फीसदी की दर कुल जीएसटी संग्रह का केवल 5 फीसदी

ही है। परिषद का इरादा समझा जा सकता है लेकिन यह भी स्पष्ट है कि इससे बहुत मामूली फर्क पड़ेगा।

जीएसटी को यदि व्यापक मंदी से जौड़कर देखें तो इसने राजकोपीय संकट को भड़काया है और उससे बेहद सावधानीपूर्वक निपटना होगा। हालांकि राजस्व में काफी कमी रह जाने की उम्मीद है लेकिन फिलहाल अप्रत्यक्ष कर दर में इजाफा अर्थव्यवस्था के माहौल को और उदासीन कर सकता है। केंद्रीय वित्त मंत्री ने राज्यों को आश्वस्त किया है कि जीएसटी की क्षतिपूर्ति देने का सिलसिला जारी रहेगा। जीएसटी राजस्व यदि सालाना 14 फीसदी की दर से नहीं बढ़ता है तो केंद्र सरकार कानूनी रूप राज्यों को हर्जाना देने के लिए

बाध्य है। चूंकि फिलहाल ऐसा नहीं हो रहा है और केंद्र भी भुगतान नहीं कर रहा है इसलिए हर्जाने का बकाया बढ़ता जा रहा है। यदि राज्यों को हजारों करोड़ रुपये का बकाया नहीं चुकाया गया तो उन्हें मजबूरन उधार लेना होगा, इससे सरकार का घाटा और बढ़ेगा तथा निजी क्षेत्र की वृद्धि और निवेश के लिए उपलब्ध फंड में और कमी आएगी। सरकार जीएसटी के बाद क्षतिपूर्ति उपकर भी लगाती है। यह राज्यों को किए जाने वाले भुगतान के लिए है लेकिन इस तरीके से भी जरूरत से कम राशि ही आ रही है।

खबरों के मुताबिक क्षतिपूर्ति उपकर में इजाफे पर भी विचार किया जा रहा है। कई लोगों ने जहां प्रस्तुति के वक्त इस खामीयुक्त जीएसटी का स्वागत किया था

के आरंभ में पूर्वी बंगाल से बड़ी तादाद में लोग यहां आकर बसे। इनमें से अधिकांश आर्थिक कारणों से जमीन और आजीविका की तलाश में आए। इसके लिए ‘घुसपैठ’ शब्द का पहला प्रयोग सन 1931 में असम के जनगणना कार्य के ब्रिटिश अधीक्षक सी एस मुल्लन ने किया था।

मुल्लन ने लिखा, ‘इस प्रांत में बीते 25 वर्षों की सबसे महत्त्वपूर्ण घटना जो समूचे असम के भविष्य को हमेशा के लिए बदल सकती है और असमिया सभ्यता और संस्कृति को पूरी तरह नष्ट कर सकती है वह है जमीन के भूखे प्रवासियों की घुसपैठ, इनमें ज्यादातर पूर्वी बंगाल और खासकर मेमनसिंह से आए मुस्लिम।’ उन्होंने इसका भयानक चित्रण करते हुए लिखा, ‘जहां कंकाल पड़ा होगा वहां गिद्ध जुट जाएंगे और जहां कहीं भी खाली जमीन होगी वहां मेमनसिंह वाले एकत्रित हो जाएंगे।’ असम के लोगों की भाषाई और जातीय चिंता का अंदाजा इस बात से लगाया जा सकता है।

यदि असम में मुस्लिमों का आर्थिक देशांतर बहुत पहले मुद्दा बन गया था, वहीं विभाजन के बाद हिंदू भी इसमें शामिल हो गए। सन 1947 के पहले आए मुस्लिम यहीं टिक गए और इसके बाद प्रताड़ित हिंदुओं के झुंड के झुंड वहां आए और पूरे क्षेत्र का जातीय संतुलन बदल गया।

यही समस्या का मूल है और इसके चलते ही सीएबी असम की चिंताओं का उतर देने में नाकाम है। वहां असली चिंता धार्मिक नहीं बल्कि जातीय, सांस्कृतिक, भाषाई और राजनीतिक है। आरएसएस और भाजपा ने बीते तीन दशक में इसे बदलने का प्रयास किया है। मैंने इस बारे में लिखा भी है। ज्यादातर मुस्लिम प्रवासि पुराने और विभाजन के पहले के हैं, उन्हें नागरिकता से वंचित नहीं किया जा सकता। बंगाली हिंदू वहां सबसे नये हैं। यही कारण है कि जिन 19 लाख लोगों को एनआरसी में छांटा गया उनमें 60 फीसदी गैर मुस्लिम हैं।

यहां भाजपा के समक्ष भीषण विरोधाभास है। यदि वह इंदिरा गांधी और मुजीबुर रहमान के समझौते के मुताबिक 25 मार्च, 1971 को कटऑफ मानती है तो मुस्लिमों से अधिक हिंदू इसमें फंसेंगे। यदि सरकार इससे पीछे जाना चाहती है तो कितना पीछे जाएगी?

भाजपा ने इसे अद्यतन सीएबी से हल करने का प्रयास किया है। असम के लोग इसे स्वीकार नहीं करेंगे। छठी अनुसूची में जनजातीय राज्यों और असम के जिलों को संरक्षण देने की बात शामिल है लेकिन उसके चलते असम के स्थानीय लोगों को और अधिक बंगाली हिंदुओं को स्वीकार करना होगा। सामान्य परिस्थितियों में हम यहां भाजपा के लिए सर वॉल्टर स्कॉट की उक्ति का प्रयोग कर सकते थे: ‘ओह! धोखा देने के पहले प्रयास में हम कितना महीन जाल बुनते हैं!’ परंतु भाजपा यह भी जानती है कि सीएबी को नई देशव्यापी एनआरसी प्रक्रिया से जौड़कर देखें तो यह यह एकदम विफल विचार है। जहां यह लागू भी है वहां यह एक विभाजनकारी, ध्रुवीकरण करने वाला विचार है। इसके विरोधियों को इसके खिलाफ खड़ा होना पड़ रहा है और इस पर ‘मुस्लिम तुष्टीकरण’ का आरोप लग सकता है। यह अगले तीन दशकों के लिए अतृच्छेद 370 या राम मंदिर जैसा मुद्दा बन सकता है।



अजय मोहंती

सीएबी-एनआरसी का लक्ष्य बांटो और जीतो

सीएबी और एनआरसी का विचार शुरुआत से ही एक नाकाम विचार है।

परंतु भाजपा के लिए यह अगला राम मंदिर है जिसका वह इस्तेमाल करेगी।

सात दशकों से पाकिस्तान का सत्ता प्रतिष्ठान एक ही राग अलाप रहा है: ‘कश्मीर विभाजन का एक अधूरा मसला है। उसे हल करने के बाद भारत और पाकिस्तान मित्रवत रह सकते हैं। ठीक कनाडा और अमेरिका की तरह।’

भारत भी इसका जवाब एक ही सुर में देता आया है: ‘विभाजन अंतिम था और हो चुका है। कोई मूर्ख या आत्मघाती प्रतिशोधी ही उस घाव को दोबारा खोलना चाहेगा।’

अब भारत के हिस्से की पटकथा बदल रही है। बीते कई दिनों के दौरान हमने नागरिकता अधिनियम 1955 या नागरिकता संशोधन विधेयक, 2019 (सीएबी) के समर्थकों की विभाजन की बात करते सुना। वे अधूरा मसला जैसी बातें नहीं करते लेकिन वे पूर्ण न्याय, निपटारे तथा गैर मुस्लिम अल्पसंख्यकों को न्याय की बात करते हैं। उनका कहना है कि सीएबी पाकिस्तान और बांग्लादेश के अल्पसंख्यकों से वादा निभाने का जरिया है। वह वादा क्या था, इस पर बहस हो सकती है। इसमें दोराय नहीं कि पहले पाकिस्तान की परिकल्पना की गई, उसके लिए लड़ाई लड़ी गई और उपमहाद्वीप के मुस्लिमों के लिए उसे घर के रूप में हासिल किया गया। परंतु इसका यह अर्थ नहीं था कि भारत उनका घर नहीं रहेगा।

यह भी सही है कि धार्मिक आधार पर एक बड़ी आबादी की अदला-बदली हुई। इस दौरान खूनखराबा और बलात्कार भी हुए। पश्चिमी इलाके में यह लेनदेन कुछ वर्षों में पूरा हो गया। भारतीय पंजाब में बहुत कम मुस्लिम और पाकिस्तानी पंजाब में बहुत कम हिंदू या सिख बचे। कुछ मामले सन 1960 के दशक के मध्य तक चले। मसलन क्रिकेटर आसिफ इकबाल जो पाकिस्तानी क्रिकेट टीम के सदस्य बने, वह सन 1961 में वहां गए। तब तक वह हैदराबाद की टीम से खेलते थे, जिसके कप्तान बाद में टाइगर पटौदी बने। सन 1965 की जंग के बाद लोगों की आवाजाही में क्षणिक तेजी आई और समाज

हो गई।

परंतु पूर्व में मामला अलग था। इसकी कई जटिल वजह हैं। पूर्वी पाकिस्तान और भारत के पश्चिम बंगाल, असम और त्रिपुरा में आबादी की अदला-बदली जल्दी समाप्त नहीं होने वाली थी। बंगाली मुस्लिम बड़ी तादाद में भारत में रह गए और पूर्वी बंगाल (पाकिस्तान) के हिंदू वहीं बने रहे। लेकिन दंगे और लोगों की यदाकदा आवाजाही चलती रही। सन 1950 में इसे रोकने के लिए तत्कालीन भारतीय प्रधानमंत्री जवाहरलाल नेहरू और पाकिस्तानी प्रधानमंत्री लियाकत अली खान ने एक समझौते पर हस्ताक्षर किए जिसे नेहरू-लियाकत समझौता कहा जाता है। इस समझौते के पांच अहम स्तंभ थे:

1. दोनों देशों ने यह प्रतिबद्धता जताई कि वे न केवल अपने अल्पसंख्यकों की रक्षा करेंगे बल्कि उन्हें सरकारी नौकरी, राजनीति और सशस्त्र बलों में सभी अधिकार और आजादी देंगे।

2. जो लोग दंगों के कारण अस्थायी रूप से विस्थापित हुए और अपने घर लौटना चाहते हैं उन्हें पूरी सुविधा और संरक्षण प्रदान किया जाएगा।

3. जो अपने घर लौटना नहीं चाहते उन्हें किसी भी अन्य प्रवासी की तरह नागरिक स्वीकार किया जाएगा।

4. इस बीच दोनों पक्षों में उन लोगों को पूरी आजादी होगी जो अभी भी दूसरी ओर जाना चाहते हैं। उन्हें पूरी सहायता और संरक्षण दिया जाएगा।

5. दोनों पक्ष कानून व्यवस्था सुनिश्चित करने के गंभीर प्रयास करेंगे ताकि लोग सुरक्षित महसूस करें।

इसके बाद ही भारत ने सन 1951 में पहला (और अब तक अंतिम) राष्ट्रीय नागरिक पंजी (एनआरसी) बनाया। सीएबी



राष्ट्र की बात

शेखर गुप्ता

हिस्सों में अल्पसंख्यकों की आबादी तेजी से घटी। माना जा सकता है कि उन्होंने पाकिस्तान छोड़ना और भारत में बसना जारी रखा।

यही कारण है कि भाजपा सीएबी को विभाजन के अधूरे एजेंडे का जवाब बताती है। उसका कहना है कि पाकिस्तान ने नेहरू-लियाकत समझौते में अपना वादा नहीं निभाया और इसलिए भारत उन गैर मुस्लिम अल्पसंख्यकों का स्वाभाविक घर बनता गया। उधर, इस्लामिक देशों में मुस्लिमों के प्रताड़ित महसूस करने की कोई वजह नहीं है।

यहां जटिलताओं की शुरुआत होती है: पहली बात, भारत के संस्थापक अपने धर्मनिरपेक्ष गणराज्य को जिन्ना का द्विराष्ट्र सिद्धांत की तरह ढालना नहीं चाहते थे। दूसरा, पुराना इतिहास किस बिंदु पर समाप्त होता है या शुरू होता है? तीसरी बात यह कि क्या ‘राष्ट्रीय’ और ‘स्थानीय’ एक दूसरे के पर्याय हैं? क्या ‘धर्म’ को ‘जातीयता’ और ‘भाषा’ का पर्याय माना जा सकता है?

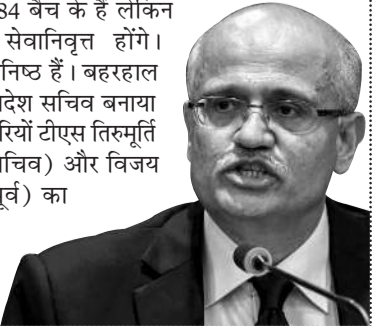
चूंकि हमने नये और पुराने इतिहास पर सवाल उठाए हैं तो हमारे लिए यह आवश्यक है कि हम कुछ दशक पीछे जाकर पूर्वी इलाके, खासकर असम में हुए स्थानांतरण की प्रकृति और जटिलता को समझें।

असम की आबादी घनी नहीं थी और वहां प्रचुर मात्रा में उर्वर जमीन और जल संसाधन मौजूद थे। इसके कारण 20वीं सदी

कानाफूसी

कौन बनेगा विदेश सचिव?

देश का अगला विदेश सचिव कौन होगा ? विजय गोखले ने तत्कालीन विदेश सचिव एस जयशंकर की सेवानिवृत्ति के बाद 28 जनवरी, 2018 को दो वर्ष की तय अवधि के लिए यह पद संभाला था। जयशंकर राजनीति में चले गए और विदेश मंत्री बन गए। बहरहाल गोखले का कार्यकाल जनवरी 2020 के आखिर में समाप्त हो रहा है। उनके बाद इस पद के तीन दावेदार हैं लेकिन सबसे तगड़े दावेदार अमेरिका में भारत के राजदूत हर्षवर्धन श्रृंगला हैं। उन्हें जयशंकर का करीबी माना जाता है लेकिन कई लोग कह रहे हैं कि वह शायद अमेरिका में रहें क्योंकि वह अमेरिका के साथ अंतरिम मुक्त व्यापार संधि पर चर्चा में शामिल हैं। दूसरे प्रत्याशी हैं संयुक्त राष्ट्र में भारत के स्थायी प्रतिनिधि सैयद अकबरुद्दीन। परंतु वह सन 1985 बैच के विदेश सेवा अधिकारी हैं और उन्हें अप्रैल 2020 में सेवानिवृत्त होना है। तीसरी प्रत्याशी रुचि घनश्याम 1982 बैच की हैं लेकिन उन्हें भी 2020 में ही सेवानिवृत्त होना है। श्रृंगला हालांकि 1984 बैच के हैं लेकिन वह सन 2022 में सेवानिवृत्त होंगे। अकबरुद्दीन दोनों के कनिष्ठ हैं। बहरहाल यदि अकबरुद्दीन को विदेश सचिव बनाया गया तो दो अन्य अधिकारियों टीएस तिरुमूर्ति (आर्थिक मामलों के सचिव) और विजय ठाकुर सिंह (सचिव-पूर्व) का समायोजन करना होगा क्योंकि दोनों अकबरुद्दीन से वरिष्ठ हैं।



आपका पक्ष

औषधीय पौधों का संरक्षण आवश्यक

समय के साथ तेजी से बदलती जीवन शैली मानव शरीर को नकारात्मक रूप से प्रभावित कर रही है। फास्ट फूड संस्कृति के प्रचलन के कारण लोगों के शरीर में आवश्यक पोषक तत्वों की कमी होती जाती है। इस वजह से शरीर की आवश्यक रोग प्रतिरोधक क्षमता में लगातार गिरावट देखी जा रही है। यही कारण है कीटनाशकों की अधिकता के माध्यम से युगी सब्जियों एवं मिलान्वटी खाद्य पदार्थों के सेवन के कुप्रभावों से लोग आसानी से रोग के शिकार हो रहे हैं। ऐसे विपरीत वातावरण में निरोग रहना सबसे बड़ी चुनौती बनती जा रही है। इन सबके बीच राहत देने वाला तथ्य यह है कि शरीर को मजबूत प्रदान करते हुए किसी भी प्रकार के टॉक्सिन के प्रभाव से मुक्त करने के उपचार आयुर्वेद में उपलब्ध है। आयुर्वेद में बहुत से औषधीय पौधों की उपयोगिता एवं प्रमाणिकता प्रयोगों द्वारा सिद्ध जा चुकी है। साधारण बुखार एवं जुकाम से लेकर पथरी, हृदयरोग, कैंसर जैसी गंभीर बीमारियों को भी ठीक करने की असाधारण क्षमता रखने वाली औषधीय वनस्पतियां पाई जाती हैं। अधिकतर औषधीय पौधे हमारे आसपास ही पाए जाते हैं। इन पौधों



का लाभ प्राप्त करने के लिए इन्हें योजनाबद्ध तरीके से उगाने की आवश्यकता होती है। देश के विभिन्न हिस्सों में संरथागत रूप से हर्बल गार्डन की स्थापना की गई है। जहां के परिसर में विभिन्न प्रकार के औषधीय पौधे जैसे गिलोय (गुरुद), एलोविरा, नागकेसर, शताव्र, मरोडुफल्ली, अर्जुन (कहुआ), बेल, नीम, भुई नीम,

हरा, बहेरा, बबूल मुसली, तेज पत्ता, कियोकंद, भुई आंवला, काली हल्दी, पथरी, हृदयरोग, कैंसर जैसी गंभीर

औषधीय पौधों की गुणवत्ता को देखते हुए आम लोगों को भी इसे अपनी जीवनशैली में शामिल करना चाहिए

हड़जोड़, पुनर्नवा, प्राचीन आंवला और तेज बल के पौधों का रोपण किया जाता है। उगाए गए पादपों की शृंखला में कुछ दुर्लभ प्रजाति के पौधे भी सम्मिलित होते हैं। अर्जुन

वृक्ष की छाल हृदय रोग के उपचार में काम

लेकिन यह स्वीकृति सशर्त थी और कहा गया था कि इसे आदर्श और किकायती बनाने तक इसमें संशोधन किए जाएंगे। इसे तार्किक और सहज बनाने का काम अब और अधिक नहीं टाला जा सकता है।

ऐसे में यह आवश्यक है कि अब मामूली छेड़छाड़ के बजाय जीएसटी में गहन सुधार पर विचार किया जाए। इसके साथ ही सरकार को राजकोपीय स्थिति पर भी करीबी नजर डालने की आवश्यकता है। कहीं अधिक बुनियादी समस्याओं को भी दूर किए जाने की आवश्यकता है। यह भी संभव है कि समुचित इनवांइस मिलान व्यवस्था के अभाव में कर वंचना के मामले बढ़ रहे हों।

यदि ऐसा है तो मंदी के दौर में आंख मूंदकर इनवांइस मिलान का क्रियान्वयन भी

खतरनाक हो सकता है। ऐसा इसलिए कि इससे लेनदेन की लागत में इजाफा हो सकता है। जीएसटी परिषद को बुनियादी चीजों पर काम करते हुए यह समझना होगा कि जीएसटी के पीछे आर्थिक समझ देह है कि यह कर चुकाना इतना आसान बना देगा कि वंचना के मामले कम हो जाएंगे। इसके लिए सहज, स्पष्ट और पारदर्शी कर व्यवस्था की आवश्यकता होगी।

आदर्श रूप में यह एकल दर होनी चाहिए। कम से कम अब सभी कर दरों को तार्किक बनाने पर काम शुरू होना चाहिए। इसके अलावा अब जबकि जीएसटी संग्रह को लेकर पर्याप्त आंकड़े हैं तो इस बात का समुचित अध्ययन होना चाहिए कि राजस्व निरपेक्ष दर आखिर क्या हो ?

भारतीय कॉर्पोरेट जगत मुखर होने से हमेशा करता रहा है परहेज



इंसानी पहलू

श्यामल मजूमदार

दैनिक जागरण

साहित्य में विचार और भाव दोनों का समावेश होता है

लापरवाही की आग

दिल्ली में अवैध रूप से चल रहे एक कारखाने में लगी आग से 40 से अधिक लोगों की मौत वास्तव में नियम-कानूनों की घोर अनदेखी का नतीजा है। इस अवैध कारखाने में आग भले ही शार्ट सर्किट से लगी हो, लेकिन वहां हुई मौतों का जिम्मेदार दिल्ली का प्रशासन भी है। देश की राजधानी में भी अवैध रूप से कारखाने चलना कुशासन की पराकाष्ठा ही है। इससे संतुष्ट नहीं हुआ जा सकता कि कारखाने के मालिक को गिरफ्तार कर लिया गया। गिरफ्तारी तो उनकी भी होनी चाहिए जिन पर यह देखने की जिम्मेदारी है कि कोई फैक्ट्री नियम-कानूनों का उल्लंघन करके न चले। यह अभागी फैक्ट्री केवल चोरी-छिपे ही नहीं चलाई जा रही थी, बल्कि वहां सुरक्षा के न्यूनतम उपाय भी नहीं थे और वह भी तब जब वहां ज्वलनशील उत्पाद निर्मित किए जा रहे थे। वास्तव में इसी कारण इतने अधिक लोग मारे गए। इन मौतों पर अफसोस जताते हुए मृतकों के परिजनों को मुआवजा देने की घोषणा करना एक तरह से कर्तव्य की इतिश्री करना ही है। इस तरह से कर्तव्य की इतिश्री अर्थात जिम्मेदारी के निर्वहन का दिखावा इसके पहले भी न जाने कितनी बार किया जा चुका है। चंद महीने पहले करोलबाग इलाके में एक होटल में आग लगने से एक दर्जन से अधिक लोग मारे गए थे। उसके पहले बवाना इलाके में एक फैक्ट्री में करीब 20 लोगों की आग में जलने से मौत हो गई थी। अब एक और फैक्ट्री में आग लगने से हुई व्यापक जनहानि यही बता रही है कि पिछली घटनाओं से कोई सबक नहीं लिया गया।

हाल के वर्षों में दिल्ली में नियम-कानूनों को धता बताने अथवा सुरक्षा उपायों की अनदेखी के कारण आग लगने की इतनी अधिक घटनाएं घट चुकी हैं कि ऐसा लगता है कि राजधानी के हालात अभी भी वैसे ही हैं जैसे तब थे जब उद्धार सिनेमाघर में लगी आग ने दर्जनों लोगों की ज़िंदगी लीली ली थी। जब नियमों के अनुपालन के मामले में देश की राजधानी का इतना बुरा हाल है तब इसकी कल्पना सहज ही की जा सकती है कि दूरगामी के इलाकों में कैसी दयनीय दशा होगी। इस दयनीय दशा के प्रमाण आए दिन मिलते भी रहते हैं। ऐसे प्रमाण भ्रष्ट नौकरशाही और साथ ही वोट बैंक की राजनीति की देन हैं। सुनिश्चित विकास विरोधी इसी गंदी राजनीति के कारण अवैध बसाहट और व्यावसायिक ठिकानों का बेतरतीब जाल सारे देश में फैलता जा रहा है। यही जाल तरह-तरह के हदसों को जन्म देता है। ये हदसे केवल लोगों की जान ही नहीं लेते, बल्कि देश की बदनामी भी करते हैं। विडंबना यह कि इसके बावजूद हम विकसित देश बनने का दम भरते हैं।

लोकतंत्र की जीत

अंगुली पर गिने नुने कुछ मतदान केंद्रों को छोड़ दें तो नक्सलियों के गढ़ में भी बंपर वोटिंग होना झारखंड के लिए शुभ संकेत है। जंगल, पहाड़ों, नदी-नालों के बीच बसे गांवों से भी बड़ी संख्या में मतदाता निकले और अपने मतदाधिकार का प्रयोग किया। मतदान के प्रति उनका यह उत्साह संकेत दे गया कि वे अपने अधिकार के प्रति न सिर्फ सजग हैं, बल्कि लोकतांत्रिक व्यवस्था को मजबूत करने के प्रति संकल्पित भी हैं। वे विकास के पक्षधर हैं और समाज के तानाबाना को बिगाड़ने में जुटे अस्माजिक तत्वों से

छुटकारा चाहते हैं। लोकतंत्र के इस महापर्व में अगर सुदूर इलाकों के मतदाता भी बढ़ चढ़कर हिस्सा ले रहे हैं तो इसमें निर्वाचन आयोग की भूमिका को भी नजरअंदाज नहीं किया जा सकता है। उसने अंतिम व्यक्ति तक को मतदान के प्रति जागरूक करने में अपनी महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई। बैनर-पोस्टर, विचार गोष्ठी, नुक्कड़ नाटक समेत प्रचार के अन्य माध्यमों के जरिये उन तक पहुंचने और मतदान के महत्व से उन्हें अवगत कराने में सफलता पाई। मतदाता बिना किसी भय के मतदान केंद्रों तक पहुंचे और अपनी पंसद का उम्मीदवार चुने। इस कार्य में स्थानीय पुलिस-प्रशासन और अर्द्धसैनिक बलों की भूमिका को भी नजरअंदाज नहीं किया जा सकता, जिसने बीहड़ों में भी अमन-चैन की कमान थाम रखी थी। अलबत्ता नक्सलियों ने कुछ क्षेत्रों में अशांति फैलाने की कोशिश भी की, परंतु अर्द्धसैनिक बलों की सजगता ने उनके मंसूबों को नाकाम कर दिया और मीलों पैदल चलकर मतदान केंद्रों तक पहुंचे। इससे इतर शहरी क्षेत्रों में ग्रामीण इलाकों से कम वोटिंग चिंतनीय है। तमाम तरह की सुविधाओं के बावजूद उनका घर से नहीं निकलना कई सवालों को जन्म देता है। जरूरत है ऐसे मतदाताओं को अपने गिरेबां में झांकने और लोकतंत्र के महत्व को समझने की। उनके मतदान करने से हमारा लोकतंत्र और मजबूत होगा।

नक्सलियों ने कुछ क्षेत्रों में अशांति फैलाने की कोशिश भी की, लेकिन अर्द्धसैनिक बलों की सजगता ने उनके मंसूबों को नाकाम कर दिया। मतदाता मीलों पैदल चलकर मतदान केंद्रों तक पहुंचे। मतदान के प्रति उनका यह उत्साह संकेत दे गया कि वे अपने अधिकार के प्रति न सिर्फ सजग हैं, बल्कि लोकतांत्रिक व्यवस्था को मजबूत करने के प्रति संकल्पित भी हैं



हृदयनारायण देशिक

ब्रिटिश लेबर पार्टी अपने पूर्वजों द्वारा किए गए औपनिवेशिक उत्पीड़न को उजागर करने की जरूरत बता रही है ताकि नई पीढ़ी उन अत्याचारों के बारे में जान सके

विश्व इतिहास में तमाम गलतियां और रक्तपात हैं। बहुत कुछ श्रेष्ठ भी है। दोनों का सम्यक बोध उपयोगी है, लेकिन इतिहास लेखन में बड़ी घटनाओं की भी योजनाबद्ध उपेक्षा होती है। ब्रिटेन के इतिहास लेखन में भी ऐसा ही हुआ है। ब्रिटिश चुनाव इसी 12 दिसंबर को है। लेबर पार्टी के नेता जेरेमी कॉर्बिन ने ब्रिटिश उपनिवेशवाद व ब्रिटिश राज के अन्याय का सही इतिहास लिखने के लिए एक शैक्षिक बोर्ड गठित करने की घोषणा की है। पार्टी घोषणा पत्र के अनुसार सत्ता में आने के बाद यही सही इतिहास स्कूलों में पढ़ाया जाएगा। 1922 के आसपास दुनिया की 20 प्रतिशत जनसंख्या पर ब्रिटिश शासन था। ब्रिटिश साम्राज्य ने इस दौरान भारत सहित तमाम देशों की जनता पर क्रूर अत्याचार किए थे। लेबर पार्टी की यह घोषणा ब्रिटिश श्रेष्ठतावाद पर हमला है। बहस तोखी है। ब्रिटिश सत्ता के अधीन रहे भारत में भी इस पर चर्चा जरूरी है। सांसद शशि थरूर सहित तमाम भारतीयों ने इसका स्वागत किया है।

ब्रिटिश राज के अन्याय और उत्पीड़न का सबसे बड़ा शिकार भारत था। गांधी जी ने 1908 में लिखा था, ‘क़रन के अनुसार भारत साम्राज्यरूपी भवन का कलश है। भारत के कारण ही ब्रिटिश साम्राज्य का अस्तित्व है। इसलिए संघर्ष जरूरी है।’ तब ब्रिटेन विश्व व्यापार का नियंता था। अन्य उपनिवेशों का तुलना में भारत में इंग्लैंड के माल की ज्यादा

ब्रिकी थी। गांधी जी ने 1913 में लिखा था, ‘भारत इंग्लैंड के माल का सबसे बड़ा ग्राहक है। भारत तैयार माल का 14.5 प्रतिशत खरीदता है, ऑस्ट्रेलिया आठ प्रतिशत, कनाडा और दक्षिण अफ्रीका छह-छह प्रतिशत।’ भारत से कच्चा माल इंग्लैंड ले जाया जाता था और वहां से तैयार माल भारत आता था। अंग्रेजी सत्ता की शोषण नीति भयावह थी। दो बार ब्रिटिश प्रधानमंत्री रहे सौलिसबरी ने भारत के संबंध में कहा था, ‘इस देश के राजस्व का बहुत बड़ा हिस्सा बाहर ले जाया जाता है। बदले में उसे कुछ नहीं मिलता। अगर उसका खून निकालना ही है तो चोरा ऐसी जगह लगाया जाना चाहिए जहां खून ज्यादा हो या कम से कम पर्याप्त मात्रा में हो। जहां वह पहले से ही कम हो ऐसी जगह नहीं।’ ब्रिटेन की युवा पीढ़ी अपने पूर्वज शासकों द्वारा किए गए उत्पीड़न से भलीभांति अवगत नहीं। ऐसे में ब्रिटिश स्कूलों में सही इतिहास पढ़ाने की पहल स्वागतयोग्य है।

भारत में अंग्रेजी सत्ता का इतिहास रक्तरंजित है। जलियांवाला बाग नरसंहार में निहत्थे बच्चे भी मारे गए थे। ब्रिटिश राज में 1807 तक श्रमिकों की भी खरीद फरोखत होती थी। 1899 से 1902 के बीच दक्षिण अफ्रीका में वोअर युद्ध के दौरान अमानवीय यातना शिविर चलाए गए थे। 1948 में ब्रिटिश सैनिकों ने मलेशिया में 24 लोगों को मारा था। 1942 के भारत छोड़ो आंदोलन में लाखों लोगों का उत्पीड़न हुआ। अंग्रेजी उपनिवेशवाद का इतिहास भयावह है। ब्रिटिश चुनावों के दौरान



अब्धेश राजपूत

ऐसे इतिहास को खंगालने और नई पीढ़ी को पढ़ाने की घोषणा वास्तव में सार्थक है।

भारत के लिए भी यह मार्गदर्शी है। यहां आक्रमणकारियों के अत्याचारों के तथ्यगत विवरण भी छिपाए जाते हैं। ब्रिटेन की लेबर पार्टी उदार मानी जाती है। ब्रिटेन के उदारवादी भी अपने देश की सत्ता के अन्याय को जनता के सामने लाने की घोषणा कर रहे हैं, लेकिन भारत के उदारवादी मोहम्मद बिन कासिम, गजनी, गोरी, बाबर और औरंगजेब सहित तमाम उत्पीड़कों की कर्तुतों पर भी पर्दा डालते हैं। भारत के उदारवादी ब्रिटिश उदारवादियों से भिन्न हैं। वे अपने अतीत की गलतियों को भी सामाजिक जागरूकता और शिक्षण की परिधि में लाने के हिमायती हैं। उनके उलट भारत में उदारवादी विदेशी हमलावरों और बादशाहों की गलतियों को ढकना ही अपना कर्तव्य मानते हैं। श्रीराम जन्मभूमि मामले में एक पक्ष ने कहा कि शासक बाबर ने गलत किया या सही, लेकिन अब हम उसकी गलती नहीं सुधार सकते।’ गलती सुधारने के लिए ही इतिहास का महत्व

है। इतिहास की गलती सुधारने में ही वर्तमान का भविष्य है। भारत के विकृत इतिहास में भारतीय पराक्रम की चर्चा कम है। बकिम चंद्र ने लिखा है, ‘यहां पारसियों समेत यवन, वाहलिक, शक, हूण, अरब और तुर्क सभी आए और कुछ दिनों के बाद खदेड़े गए।’ भारतीय पराक्रम का यह तथ्य इतिहास का भाग नहीं है। यहां आक्रमणों का सिलसिला नहीं थमा। मोहम्मद बिन कासिम का हमला (712 ई.) फिर गजनी द्वारा 17 बार, मोहम्मद गोरी (1173 ई.), तैमूर (1398 ई.), बाबर (1526 ई.) नादिरशाह (1738 ई.) और अहमदशाह अब्दाली (1761 ई.) के हमले रक्तम इतिहास हैं। उदारवादी इतिहास के क्रूर हमलावरों का सुंदर चित्रण करने के पक्षधर हैं।

लेबर पार्टी अपने ही पूर्वजों द्वारा किए गए उत्पीड़न पर शोध की जरूरत बता रही है। वहां भारत में विदेशी हमलावरों के अत्याचारों पर खुली चर्चा में भी उदारपंथी बाधक हैं। अब्दाली और मराठों के बीच पानीपत युद्ध हुआ। राष्ट्रभक्त मराठा लड़े। अब्दाली क्रूर था।

मातृभाषा में हो प्रारंभिक शिक्षा

आंध्र प्रदेश के मुख्यमंत्री जगनमोहन रेड्डी द्वारा प्रारंभिक शिक्षा के लिए अंग्रेजी माध्यम की वकालत करने के बाद राज्य में एक नया विवाद छिड़ गया है। विपक्षी दलों ने उन्हें तेलुगु भाषा विरोधी कारग देना शुरू कर दिया है। उनका यह दांव भले ही एक राजनीतिक धींगमुश्ती में बदल जाए, लेकिन इसने राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर मातृभाषा को लेकर एक व्यापक विमर्श अवश्य शुरू कर दिया है। जगन की ऐसी पहल के उजट कुछ ही दिन पहले प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने अपने रेडियो कार्यक्रम ‘मन की बात’ में देशवासियों से मातृभाषाओं के अधिकाधिक इस्तेमाल और उन्हें बढ़ावा देने की अपील की थी। उपराष्ट्रपति वेंकैया नायडू भी मातृभाषा में शिक्षा देने की वकालत करते रहे हैं। ‘नई राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति’ के संशोधित मसौदे में भी मातृभाषा और भारतीय भाषाओं के संदर्भ में अहम सिफारिशें हैं, पर मातृभाषा के संदर्भ में एक महत्वपूर्ण बिंदु को लेकर शिक्षा नीति तैयार वाली कस्तूरभैरव समिति ने शायद गंभीरता से विचार नहीं किया। यह बिंदु है प्राथमिक शिक्षा में मातृभाषा का। हालांकि मातृभाषा किसे कहें, इसे लेकर एक विवाद भी है। क्या है मातृभाषा की भारतीय संकल्पना? मातृभाषा में शिक्षा क्यों जरूरी है? इस सवाल में शिक्षास्त्र के शोधों के क्या निष्कर्ष हैं? राष्ट्रहित में क्या किया जाना चाहिए?



प्रो. निरंजन कुमार



संस्कार और जातीय इतिहास एवं परंपरा से जुड़ता है। उदाहरण के लिए अयोध्या में रहने वालों की मातृभाषा एक तरफ अवधी है तो दूसरी तरफ हिंदी भी। इसी तरह धनबाद में रहने वाले आदमी की मातृभाषा एक तरफ ‘खोरठा’ भाषा है तो हिंदी भी उसकी भाषा है। यही स्थिति कर्नाटक में भी देखी जा सकती है जहां एक बड़ी आबादी ‘तुलु’ नामक भाषा तो बोलती है, लेकिन व्यापक प्रयोजनों के लिए कन्नड़ का प्रयोग करती है। यही चीज तेलंगाना में ‘लंबादी’ भाषा बोलने वालों और तेलुगु के संदर्भ में देख सकते हैं। कहने का तात्पर्य है कि प्रादेशिक भाषाएं भी एक स्तर पर मातृभाषा का ही रूप हैं और जो सरकारी स्कूलों में शिक्षण का माध्यम भी है।

शिक्षाशास्त्र के विभिन्न शोध बताते हैं कि बच्चों के पूर्ण मनो-बौद्धिक विकास के लिए आरंभिक शिक्षण मातृभाषा में ही होना चाहिए। यूनेस्को ने भी जोर देकर कहा है कि आरंभिक शिक्षण मातृभाषा में होने से बोध एवं संज्ञान क्षमता बढ़ती है। छोटे बच्चों के संदर्भ में मेरा प्रत्यक्ष अनुभव है कि गणित या सामान्य चीजें भी अंग्रेजी में उन्हें नहीं समझ आतीं, जबकि वही चीज हिंदी या उनकी मातृभाषा में बताई जाए तो उनके लिए ज्यादा कठिनाई नहीं आती। शैक्षणिक मनोविज्ञान के अनुसार मातृभाषा में प्रप्रेषण एवं संज्ञान सहज तथा शीघ्र हो जाता है। इससे

बच्चे कठिन चीजें भी आसानी से समझ लेते हैं, जबकि इतर भाषाओं में बच्चों को रटना पड़ता है, जो उनके पूर्ण मानसिक विकास के लिए ठीक नहीं है।

नई शिक्षा नीति मसौदे में भी मातृभाषा की शक्ति को रेखांकित करते हुए कहा गया है कि जहां तक हो सके आठवीं कक्षा तक की पढ़ाई मातृभाषा में ही होनी चाहिए। उच्चतर शिक्षा में भी शिक्षण माध्यम के रूप में भारतीय भाषाओं के उपयोग को बढ़ाने की बात है, लेकिन ये सिफारिशें केवल एक सद्दिच्छा के रूप में हैं, इनको लागू करने लेकर कोई अनिवार्यता नहीं है। प्रारंभिक शिक्षण के लिए मातृभाषा को अनिवार्य कर देना चाहिए। दिल्ली में ही एक स्कूल है सरदार पटेल विद्यालय जो दिल्ली के सर्वश्रेष्ठ स्कूलों में से है। इस स्कूल में कक्षा पांच तक की पढ़ाई हिंदी में होती है। यहां के विद्यार्थी न सिर्फ अकादमिक ज्ञान में श्रेष्ठ और विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में बहुत सफल हैं, बल्कि आचरण, मूल्य और संस्कारों में भी वे एक प्रतिमान के रूप में देखे जाते हैं। वैश्विक स्तर पर देखें तो जर्मनी, फ्रांस, इटली, स्पेन, स्वीडन, नॉर्वे, अमेरिका, चीन, जापान, कोरिया आदि देशों की तरक्की का एक बड़ा कारण उनकी आरंभिक शिक्षा का मातृभाषा में होना भी है।

दुर्भाग्य से आजादी के बाद देश में शिक्षा का पूरा मॉडल औपनिवेशिक प्रभाव से प्रभावित शिक्षाविदों के हाथ में रहा। इन तथ्याकथित अभिजात्य लोगों की दृष्टि में अंग्रेजी और पश्चिमी चिंतन पद्धति ज्यादा बेहतर थी। यहां तक कि गरीबों-निम्न वर्ग की वकालत करने वाले मार्क्सवादी बुद्धिजीवी भी भारतीय भाषाओं में शिक्षण के मुद्दे पर उदासीनता या हिकारत का भाव रखते थे। 1966 में कोठारी शिक्षा आयोग तक ने प्रारंभिक शिक्षण को मातृभाषा में करने की सिफारिश की थी, लेकिन दुर्भाग्य से मातृभाषाएं या भारतीय भाषाएं उपेक्षित ही रहीं। गांधी जी ने कहा था कि ‘यदि में तानाशाह होता तो विदेशी भाषा में शिक्षा का दिया जाना तुरंत बंद कर देता। सभी अध्यापकों को स्वदेशी भाषाएं अपनाने को मजबूर कर देता। जो आनाकानी करते, उन्हें बर्खास्त कर देता।’ समय आ गया है कि सरकारी स्कूलों के साथ-साथ सभी निजी स्कूलों में भी प्रारंभिक शिक्षण मातृभाषा में अनिवार्य कर दिया जाए। एक समय एवं सशक्त राष्ट्र के निर्माण के लिए यह अपरिहार्य है। उम्मीद है कि मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्रालय इस पर विचार करेगा।

(लेखक दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय में प्रोफेसर हैं) response@jagran.com

बच्चे कठिन चीजें भी आसानी से समझ लेते हैं, जबकि इतर भाषाओं में बच्चों को रटना पड़ता है, जो उनके पूर्ण मानसिक विकास के लिए ठीक नहीं है।

नई शिक्षा नीति मसौदे में भी मातृभाषा की शक्ति को रेखांकित करते हुए कहा गया है कि जहां तक हो सके आठवीं कक्षा तक की पढ़ाई मातृभाषा में ही होनी चाहिए। उच्चतर शिक्षा में भी शिक्षण माध्यम के रूप में भारतीय भाषाओं के उपयोग को बढ़ाने की बात है, लेकिन ये सिफारिशें केवल एक सद्दिच्छा के रूप में हैं, इनको लागू करने लेकर कोई अनिवार्यता नहीं है। प्रारंभिक शिक्षण के लिए मातृभाषा को अनिवार्य कर देना चाहिए। दिल्ली में ही एक स्कूल है सरदार पटेल विद्यालय जो दिल्ली के सर्वश्रेष्ठ स्कूलों में से है। इस स्कूल में कक्षा पांच तक की पढ़ाई हिंदी में होती है। यहां के विद्यार्थी न सिर्फ अकादमिक ज्ञान में श्रेष्ठ और विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में बहुत सफल हैं, बल्कि आचरण, मूल्य और संस्कारों में भी वे एक प्रतिमान के रूप में देखे जाते हैं। वैश्विक स्तर पर देखें तो जर्मनी, फ्रांस, इटली, स्पेन, स्वीडन, नॉर्वे, अमेरिका, चीन, जापान, कोरिया आदि देशों की तरक्की का एक बड़ा कारण उनकी आरंभिक शिक्षा का मातृभाषा में होना भी है।

दुर्भाग्य से आजादी के बाद देश में शिक्षा का पूरा मॉडल औपनिवेशिक प्रभाव से प्रभावित शिक्षाविदों के हाथ में रहा। इन तथ्याकथित अभिजात्य लोगों की दृष्टि में अंग्रेजी और पश्चिमी चिंतन पद्धति ज्यादा बेहतर थी। यहां तक कि गरीबों-निम्न वर्ग की वकालत करने वाले मार्क्सवादी बुद्धिजीवी भी भारतीय भाषाओं में शिक्षण के मुद्दे पर उदासीनता या हिकारत का भाव रखते थे। 1966 में कोठारी शिक्षा आयोग तक ने प्रारंभिक शिक्षण को मातृभाषा में करने की सिफारिश की थी, लेकिन दुर्भाग्य से मातृभाषाएं या भारतीय भाषाएं उपेक्षित ही रहीं। गांधी जी ने कहा था कि ‘यदि में तानाशाह होता तो विदेशी भाषा में शिक्षा का दिया जाना तुरंत बंद कर देता। सभी अध्यापकों को स्वदेशी भाषाएं अपनाने को मजबूर कर देता। जो आनाकानी करते, उन्हें बर्खास्त कर देता।’ समय आ गया है कि सरकारी स्कूलों के साथ-साथ सभी निजी स्कूलों में भी प्रारंभिक शिक्षण मातृभाषा में अनिवार्य कर दिया जाए। एक समय एवं सशक्त राष्ट्र के निर्माण के लिए यह अपरिहार्य है। उम्मीद है कि मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्रालय इस पर विचार करेगा।

(लेखक दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय में प्रोफेसर हैं) response@jagran.com



महानता का रहस्य

शंकराचार्य के अद्वैतवाद दर्शन के विद्वान स्वामी रामतीर्थ के जीवन से जुड़ा एक प्रसंग काफी प्रेरणादायी है। कहते हैं कि एक बार वे छोटे बच्चों को पढ़ा रहे थे। पढ़ाने के क्रम में उन्होंने ब्लैकबोर्ड पर एक लाइन खींची और अपने शिष्यों से पूछा, ‘इस रेखा को बिना स्पर्श किए हुए कोन छात्र इसे छोटा कर सकता है?’ थोड़ी देर के लिए पूरी कक्षा शांत रही। प्रश्न गूढ़ था और इस कारण छात्र विस्मित थे। कुछ देर के बाद एक विद्यार्थी अपने बड़ा और ब्लैकबोर्ड पर खींची गई रेखा के सामानांतर एक बड़ी-सी लाइन खींच दी। परिणामस्वरूप पहले वाली रेखा छोटी हो गई। इसके बड़े निहितार्थ थे।

इस उपक्रम की समाप्ति के बाद इसका सार समझाते हुए स्वामी रामतीर्थ ने अपने शिष्यों से कहा, ‘जीवन में महानता प्राप्त करने के लिए किसी व्यक्ति के अस्तित्व को खत्म करने की जरूरत नहीं होती है। न ही उसे अपमानित और नीचा दिखाने की आवश्यकता है, बल्कि व्यक्ति को अपने जीवन में ऐसे आध्यात्मिक, चारित्रिक और नैतिक गुणों का विकास करना चाहिए कि सामने वाले को खुद का कद बौना प्रतीत होने लगे। इस प्रकार से हासिल महानता सर्वश्रेष्ठ और ऐसा महान व्यक्ति कालजयी होता है।’

लेकिन दुर्भाग्यवश हम व्यावहारिक जीवन में ऐसा कर नहीं पाते हैं और जीवन की अंतिम सांस तक दूसरों के मुकाबले आगे बढ़ने की कोशिश में मन को दुखी करते रह जाते हैं। दूसरों के प्रति छल-प्रपंच, ईर्ष्या और द्वेष के जहर से खुद के जीवन की शांति का गला घोट देते हैं। इतना ही नहीं गला-काट प्रतियोगिता के वर्तमान परिवेश में खुद को सफलता के शीर्ष पर देखने की अंधी चाह में हम पता नहीं कितनी कुलिसत योजनाएं बना बैठते हैं। मानवता के प्रति सद्भाव, प्रेम, दया, करुणा, सहानुभूति और अन्य मानवीय गुणों के अभाव में ही हम मर्यादित आचरण की सीमा लांघ जाते हैं। खुद को निरंतर परिमार्जित करते रहने, मानव मात्र के कल्याण के भाव के साथ धैर्यपूर्वक सात्विक और संयमित जीवन के जीने में ही सच्ची महानता का रहस्य छिपा होता है।

श्रीप्रकाश शर्मा

लेकिन कभी-कभी हमको यह नियम कानून के ऊपर सोचने को मजबूर कर देता है। क्योंकि इन्हीं कानून की वजह से कभी-कभी दोषियों को सही वक्त पर सजा नहीं मिल पाती है। ऐसे में सरकार को इस पर कुछ कठोर कदम उठाने की आवश्यकता है, जिससे न्याय प्रणाली में तेजी आ सके।

satyarnai276304@gmail.com

नारी सम्मान

नारी आधुनिकरण के दौर में हर क्षेत्र में अव्वल है, परंतु उसका बराबरी के साथ चलना कुछ संकीर्ण सोच वाले लोगों को नागवार लगता है। प्रश्न तो समूचे समाज की व्यवस्था पर उठता है और यह मानवता बदलाव की अपेक्षा करता है। यह बदलाव उस मानसिकता को बदलने का कलावद को लेकर है जिसमें घर के भीतर से ही बेटी तथा बेटों के साथ बराबरी का व्यवहार निहित हो। अगर बेटी के लिए नियम कानून घर में है तो बेटों पर भी वह लागू हो। पाठ्यक्रम में ऐसे मूलभूत बदलाव लाए जाएं जिसमें नारी सम्मान का ज्ञान सम्मिलित हो।

anandche621@gmail.com

इस संतंभ में किसी भी विषय पर राय व्यक्त करने अथवा दैनिक जागरण के राष्ट्रीय संस्करण पर प्रतिक्रिया व्यक्त करने के लिए पाठकगण संस्करण पर प्रतिक्रिया दें। आप हमें पत्र भेजने के साथ ई-मेल भी कर सकते हैं।

अपने पत्र इस पते पर भेजें : दैनिक जागरण, राष्ट्रीय संस्करण, डी-210-211, सेक्टर-63, नोएडा ई-मेल: mailbox@jagran.com

मेलबाक्स

नागरिकता निर्धारण की कसौटी

संजय गुप्त का आलेख ‘नागरिकता निर्धारण का सही तरीका’ पढ़ा। अमेरिका में नागरिकता दिए जाने समय वास्य (डब्ल्यूएसपी-व्हाइट एंग्लो सैक्सन प्रोटेस्टेंट) कसौटी का पालन किया जाता है। यानी वे लोग जो उत्तरी यूरोप से आने वाले श्वेत प्रोटेस्टेंट हैं, उन्हें प्राथमिकता दी जाती है। शेष लोगों को नागरिकता कानून के अंतर्गत 15 वर्ष निवास की अवधि पूरी करनी होती है। बाद में उनका संस्कृतीकरण यानी देशज संस्कृति में रंगने का काम किया जाता है। वास्य समुदाय अमेरिकी जीवन के साथ शीघ्र एकरूप हो जाता है। कोई समस्या पैदा नहीं करता। अतः वह वहां प्राथमिकता पाने वाला समुदाय है। इसी प्रकार भारत के मामले में वही स्थिति हिंदू एवं यहां उत्पन्न अन्य मतों-जैन, बौद्ध, सिख की जाए। एक समय एवं सशक्त राष्ट्र के निर्माण के लिए यह अपरिहार्य है। उम्मीद है कि मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्रालय इस पर विचार करेगा।

अजय मित्तल, मेरठ

सुस्त न्याय प्रणाली

भारत एक ऐसा देश है जहां अपराधियों को भी सुधारने का मौका दिया जाता है। यही हमारे लोकतंत्र की खासियत है।

रणजीत वर्मा, फरीदाबाद

